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GERTRUDE CROWNFIELD

has also written

JOSCELYN OF THE FORTS

THE FEAST OF NOEL

ALISON BLAIR

THE BLUE SWORDSMAN

THE SHADOW WITCH

PRINCESS WHITE FLAME

Published by

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Freedom's Daughter

GERTRUDE CROWNFIELD

AUTHOR OF "ALISON BLAIR," "JOSCELYN OF THE FORTS," ETC.

Illustrated by
Agnes C. Lehman

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To

My Inspiring Friend

MARY BOTSFORD CHARLTON

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

FOREWORD

IN writing this book, with its accurate and authentic background of our country's life and history during this period of the American Revolution, the author has received signal aid in the form of suggestion, criticism and review of all that has to do with military details and situations, from her friend, Captain John McBride, U. S. A., for which she cannot adequately thank him. Her gratitude is due, as well, to Mr. John Russell Hayes of the Friends' Historical Library of Swarthmore College, to the librarians of the Historical Library of Philadelphia, and to the librarians in the Historical and Genealogical Departments of the New York Public Library, for their helpful co-operation during her many months of research, necessary for the setting, the atmosphere, and the details of the story.

GERTRUDE CROWNFIELD

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Freedom's Daughter

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Chapter I

SEVEN struck from the ancient mahogany clock in the wide hallway of the home of Reba Stanhope. Not a late hour of the morning, certainly, yet for her the sound marked a definite number of household duties already accomplished, and welcomed her back from the family marketing as she entered the broad white doorway that led in from the street.

In the Quaker city of Philadelphia, even among the prosperous and influential class to which the Stanhopes belonged, young girls and women were accustomed to go with small basket on arm to the public market where stalls and hucksters' carts were assembled, filled with country produce, to bring thence, in their own hands, some of the lighter, more fragile articles purchased, while a man or woman servant attended them with a huge market basket to fetch the weightier ones.

This morning round-faced, chocolate-skinned Dorcas, broad of hip, and clad in stiff lilac-colored calico, had accompanied her young mistress, and now turned aside, with creaking, heavily laden basket, to go directly to the kitchen premises through the covered alley that ran between the substantial red brick house of the Stanhopes on the one side, and its counterpart on the other, belonging to Friend Benjamin Westwood.

Reba, her shallow white willow basket, with precious freight of new-laid eggs held delicately in her hand, passed through the quiet hall, its peaceful silence broken only by the slow ticking of the clock, and through the

shaded dining-room, out into the cool pantry, where she knew she would find her aunt, Hannah Stanhope, busy among the household stores, dealing to the kitchen help the supplies for the day.

"Aunt Hannah," she began, a note of eagerness in her fresh young voice, "I met Friend Bartram's Harvey among the hucksters' stalls. He had a message for me. The Cherokee roses are in bloom, fine as never before, and Friend Bartram invites me to come today, and see them—that is, if thee is willing."

Hannah Stanhope, her serene unwrinkled face framed in its thin white cap, a broad white kerchief of sheer lawn folded with exactness across her dove-grey gown, lifted her eyes from her weighing of sugar. "I see no reason why thee should be denied, Reba. But be careful of the eggs, child," for she noted at this juncture, that the contents of the basket were perilously tilted. "Set them down gently, and smooth thy hair. 'Tis unseemly ruffled about thy ears."

"'Tis not true Quaker hair, dear aunt," laughed Reba gaily, "and will not stay in place, as thee well knows." The willow basket deposited securely on the shelf, she raised her hands to remove her broad hat, and stroke decorously down the loose curling tendrils of red gold, that never would yield for long to that flat arrangement about face and ears esteemed the only proper way of dressing the hair for modest Quaker woman or maid.

"Harvey promised to come in the chaise, at ten of the clock, to learn whether I may go," went on Reba, her large hazel-grey orbs alive with pleasure at the prospect before her.

"Thee must lay away the clean linen in the presses, and tidy thy bedchamber before thee makes thyself

ready to go," said Hannah, wiping out the brass scales which she had been using; and then, as Reba danced away, her aunt's mild voice pursued her in admonition: "Nay, child. Not in such impulsive haste. Let all things be done orderly, and in quietness."

Reba's feet, in their clocked silken hose, and strapped slippers, went forward with less un-Quakerly speed, but long before black Harvey dismounted from the chaise to obtain the answer to his master's message, she sat ready upon the sofa.

At this period Quaker womenkind had by no means universally adopted the severe garb that they assumed some years later. Therefore she was daintly arrayed in a white chintz gown sprigged with green. A white straw hat with broad white ribbons crowned her bright hair, and her slender hands were encased in finely knitted white silk mitts, tied at the elbows with narrow green ribbons.

Outwardly she appeared a very model of tranquillity, but inwardly she was longing to be out and away.

Once Harvey had come, however, once she had mounted to the chaise with his assistance, had waved farewell to her Aunt Hannah, and left Philadelphia streets behind, youth asserted itself, and she gave free rein to her bubbling spirits, and chattered as unreservedly and gaily to him during the four mile drive between her home and John Bartram's garden, as though she were a Willing, or a Chew, a Shippen, or an Allen, born and bred in the gay atmosphere of Christ Church or St. Peter's and not Reba Stanhope, daughter of genteel Friends, and reared in the staid customs of Bank Meeting House.

In Harvey she found a sympathetic listener. He had the African's love of brightness and beauty, and the

sweetness of her young voice was music to him, as she made now this, now that, light-hearted comment.

"Is not the Schuylkill calm today? A veritable mirror! The trees seem to stand upon their heads in midstream!"

And again: "See yonder how the clouds move like huge ships across the blue! Does thee not love the great white clouds, Harvey?"

Then, as they neared the garden, her ecstatic cry, "The roses! Oh, the roses! Drive quickly, Harvey, quickly. I can hardly wait to smell and touch them!"

At this, Dobbin, unused, as a Quaker horse should be, to undue celerity, was roused from his customary dignified pace to a smart trot, for there was little that Harvey would not do to oblige bright-haired Reba Stanhope.

The beat of hoofs on his roadway brought tall Friend Bartram out to the horseblock to help his guest over the wheel.

"Welcome, Reba. Thy coming is timely. I would not have had thee miss the roses in their prime."

"Nor the sight of the Lady Petrie pear tree," put in his practical wife, Ann, who had come to the chaise, as ready as her husband to give their favorite greeting. "The boughs are covered with young fruit. Never have we had such a crop in prospect."

The celebrated pear tree, with its burden of hard green fruit, was to be inspected and admired first, to please Friend Ann, who must shortly return to her household duties, and the supervision and preparation of the noonday dinner for the family and large number of servants that John Bartram's many acres of farmland and botanical garden required.

A noted botanist, John Bartram was friend and correspondent of the great botanists and scientists of his day. The post brought him letters penned by Linnæus, Sir Hans Sloane, Collingson, Fothergill, the Earl of

Bute, and Lady Petrie. Sailing vessels came with many a slip of plant, rare tree or shrub, to him from foreign lands, and carried back, in interchange, others rarer and stranger than any he received. Indefatigable gleaner and observer he traversed every known part of America, from the Everglades of Florida to the outposts of what was then farthest west.

To Reba, this botanical garden, the first to be established in the New World, and cherished by her old friend, was a never-ending source of delight. She loved to roam in its sunny spaces, to tarry among the fragrant unclipped box trees (gift from the Earl of Bute), to wander down the oak walk in the shade, or rest on the pillared porch of the quaint, many-roomed house, which Friend Bartram had built with stone quarried and hewn by himself.

On the outer wall, above his study window, he had carved a devout inscription:

"It is God Alone, Almighty Lord
The Holy One By Me Adored."

Roses pink and yellow clambering up the house wall in fragrant profusion, made a richly colored frame for it on this June day.

Her thoughts concentrated upon the Cherokee roses in the farther garden, Reba followed Friend Bartram's swinging stride away from the house, to where the creamy blossoms lifted buds and wide-opened golden centres to the warm sun.

"Exquisite!" she exclaimed, when they had reached them. "Lovelier than ever before!"

Her sun-hat fell back upon her shoulders, as she bent to inhale their rich odor, leaving her shining locks uncovered.

"Rarely fine; rarely fine," agreed John Bartram, his

face wreathed in a pleased smile. Cutting one of the most perfect, he laid it against his companion's red-gold hair. "Thee is not unlike a white rose, thyself, Reba," he reflected aloud, "a rose, fresh from the hand of the Creator, sent to give brightness and fragrance to the world."

Reba glanced up at him archly. "Let not Aunt Hannah hear thee say that of me, Friend Bartram. She would surely rebuke thee, lest thee should encourage me in wicked vanity."

John Bartram regarded her out of wise old eyes, and placed the rose in her hand. "Truth will do thee no harm, my little maid. To know that thee brings joy will do thee no harm," he repeated, "if thee but remembers that sweetness and fragrance are gifts from God, to be used in noble service, and not to be employed for mean and selfish ends."

"I will remember," she promised gravely. Considering, with wide eyes, the golden heart of the rose, she wondered for a moment, what manner of service it was to be, that would be required of her, but presently, drawn by the freshness of the garden, by the humming of the honey-seeking bees, and the flitting and singing of birds among the branches, she gave over grave thoughts for the time.

She came back to them, however, when shortly before her departure, she stood with Friend Bartram near the doorway of his house.

"Does thee believe in freedom, Friend Bartram?" she inquired, watching the snip, snip, of his garden shears, as he gathered a nosegay for her Aunt Hannah.

"Verily, I do," returned he solemnly. His shears paused. Straightening his tall spare form, he pointed to the inscription on the wall. "There, Reba, is the proof of

it. For the faith that those words make manifest, a faith that differs from Friends' Testimony, yet my free opinion withal, I was disowned, and cast out, long years ago, from Friends' Meeting."

"Then, if thee believes in freedom, thee is heart and soul for the independence of our Colonies," she declared, with conviction.

"I favor the righteousness of their protests," granted Bartram, "yet thee must understand, child, that I am no abettor of war. England is our mother country, and our difficulties with her should be adjusted by peaceful means, as between mother and child."

"But if they cannot be," persisted Reba, "what then?"

"I still hope that they may be, and that the war will cease." He fell to musing, and Reba, respecting his mood, forbore to break in upon it.

"War," he went on presently, a heavy shadow upon his brow, "dreadful and devastating war! What might it not do to this garden, product of more than fifty years of unremitting patient toil, of gathering from far places, to increase the sum of knowledge of the marvelous works of God? To it I have devoted the best years of my life. If war should come this way—if this garden should be trampled to the dust, utterly destroyed——" he ceased abruptly, a spasm of pain distorting his face. Not until he had regained complete control of his overpowering emotion, did he speak again, but then his words came with finality: "Man's right to freedom is the gift of God. Let none dispute it."

Reba gazed thoughtfully across the garden. The flowers tossing their perfume into the summer air, the birds singing and flitting uncurbed from twig to twig, were free.

She knew that less than a year ago, Congress had

agreed in solemn session, that man was endowed by his Creator with the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Yet in this year of 1777, British soldiers and Hessian mercenaries were treading the soil of the American Colonies with arrogant feet, and George the Third of England, and his ministry, were determined to conquer his rebellious subjects at all costs, to crush their commerce and industries, and to impose upon them his unjust taxes, his stubborn will, his narrow policies.

She had heard how William Pitt, in England's Parliament, exhausted his eloquence in vain in behalf of the Colonies' rights. She had heard how Sons of Liberty in Faneuil Hall in Boston had raised fruitless protests; how Benjamin Franklin, John and Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Washington and many others, had proclaimed the injustice to which their countrymen had long been subjected.

She had thrilled at the stand of the Americans at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, battles which had proved how doggedly the colonists were determined to resist further oppression. Their Declaration of Independence in July of 1776 had followed, amply demonstrating that their convictions of their right to govern themselves were unalterable.

Colonel George Washington, summoned from Virginia to head the little patriot army, had accepted the office of Commander in Chief, and the rank of General, under a New England elm.

A year of varying fortunes had ensued, of battles lost and battles won, of masterly retreats and courageous advances.

Now Washington was encamped with his army on a height at Middlebrook in New Jersey, some ten miles

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"If war should come to this garden!"

distant from New Brunswick, while the British general, Sir William Howe, was manœuvering his forces to get through and capture her own city of Philadelphia.

Knowing these things, Reba was well acquainted, also, with the Quaker Testimony of non-resistance and peace. Many Quakers, and others in her native city were Tories, or, as they termed themselves, Loyalists. Others still chose to remain neutral, going about their business undisturbed by war's alarms.

Among the Friends were some, however, who felt the cause of the Colonists to be so just, the tyranny so vile, that it was unfair for them to accept the benefits of a country, while they did nothing toward the defence of its rights. These were known as Free Quakers, or as some called them, Fighting Quakers, and they had come out unqualifiedly for freedom.

David Stanhope, Reba's father, who had died while she was a little child, had been noted for his free spirit in the defence of whatever appealed to his conscience as fair and just. More than once this militant spirit had called down upon him open reproof in Meeting.

Reba felt the same instinct that had animated him stirring within herself today.

"If my father were here now," she thought, "he would not be less free than he was of old to speak his mind and take his stand. He would be a Fighting Quaker. My spirit is like to his. I am a daughter of freedom. Being a maid, I cannot fight, but I can serve, and she who serves for this high cause, fights. I, too, will be a Fighting Quaker."

She had left her quiet home that morning a carefree maid, eager for summer roses. Come of a long line of peace-loving men and women, brought up by them under Quaker tenets of peace and non-resistance to injustice

and injury, she pledged herself, in this hour of her country's need, to support war.

If war should come to Philadelphia she would be hemmed in by it, approaching her as it would by land and sea. Her fortunes might be wrecked, and herself in utmost peril, for all she knew, yet if she could have foreseen, in this moment of her solemn vow, what that vow was to entail upon her of hardship, and danger, and suffering, she would nevertheless have made it unfalteringly, and without reserve.

Chapter II

VOLUNTEERS drilled upon the common. Militia was constantly and urgently being called for, and Philadelphia patriots must be ready to furnish their quota. At any time the demand might come for it, and marching orders be given.

Two young girls, walking along the common's edge, viewed them with sidelong glances, that, together with their slow steps, betrayed the interest they felt in the evolutions of the men. They did not venture to stand to watch them, since no well-conducted maid of that period would deliberately have done this unattended by her elders.

These two were Quakers, and as such were forbidden by the Rules of Discipline for Friends to look upon military tactics, or instruments of war, or to connive at or encourage war in any way whatsoever.

One of them, however, handsome Deborah Norris, was through her mother, Widow Mary Norris, already openly allied with the Free Quakers, and the Norris mansion, in Chestnut Street, had long welcomed to its doors those men and women foremost in the affairs of the Colonies who were believers in Independence.

The other, Reba Stanhope, ardent patriot at heart, had not yet publicly avowed herself, being loth to cause pain sooner than need be to her Aunt Hannah, who, she had no reason to believe, entertained any but the strictest adherence to Britain's monarch, and pacific Quaker teachings. Nevertheless, she must speak before

long, must disclose those inmost sentiments which her candid impulsive nature had found difficult to conceal even for an hour.

Debby's unhampered and ever ready tongue made comment presently upon the drilling men.

"How well some of them train, Reba, always alert, never out of line. Yet how ridiculously awkward others," she laughed, "as though they feared that if the musket slipped, it might blow off their heads."

"They will make good soldiers in time, every one of them," opined Reba.

"Does thee note," went on Debby, "that among the most soldierly there are not a few professed Friends? 'Tis strange to see these bearing arms, and preparing themselves for battle."

"I think the more of them for that," was the prompt rejoinder.

"To be sure," quoth Deb. "Thee could not do otherwise, and be what I think thee. The cause of Independence, saith my dear mother, is worth shedding one's last drop of blood to win."

Reba, forgetting everything but that which filled her heart, paused by the commonside, tossing back her head, crowned by its wealth of red-gold hair. "Were I youth instead of maid, Debby Norris," she cried, "I would be at drill yonder."

"That would I," assented Debby fervently, "that would I."

Their voices, pitched higher in the intensity of their feeling than they realized, struck upon the ears of a young Quaker, but a few paces behind them. Both of these girls were known to him, and had he done his duty as a follower of the Testimony, he would have stepped

forward immediately, and rebuked them for their ungodly speech, but for reasons of his own he forbore. Turning short around to avoid passing them, he took a by-street, and disappeared.

Next morning, seated at breakfast with her Aunt Hannah in the square dining-room of the Stanhope house, Reba looked meditatively out of window across the vine-shadowed piazza, and the wide garden. She was giving scant attention to the flaky biscuit and delicately browned omelet that Dorcas had set before her, and she tasted absently of the chocolate in the porcelain cup offered her by her aunt.

Several weeks had passed since she had had her moment of consecration amid the roses. Her thoughts today were upon her vow, and upon the words she had spoken yesterday as she had watched the volunteers at drill.

Wondering what her aunt would think of her, if she could know that her cherished niece harbored a warlike spirit, she found confession trembling upon her tongue. Best speak, and have it over. Yet in what words could she convey the startling intelligence?

While she paused to choose them, the knocker on the street door resounded, and Phoebe, the maid, answering it, unceremoniously ushered a young Friend, Richard Skinner by name, into the dining-room.

A short, stockily built person he was, rosy and round of face. His drab cloth garments, drab hose, and shoes with plain horn buckles sat snugly upon his well-fed frame. Sleek hair fell straight and unqueued to his square shoulders from under a flat, broad-brimmed hat. Eyes drab as his clothing, lips evenly closed, revealed nothing at any time that he preferred to keep hidden.

It was he, who, on the preceding day, had overheard Reba and Debby Norris indiscreetly voicing their patriotic sentiments.

Declining an invitation to join the family at breakfast, he settled himself composedly in a chair beside the open window, and proceeded to state the object of his visit.

"Perhaps thee is not cognizant, Friend Stanhope," he began, with an assumption of regret, "that Reba hath gone far astray from the Testimony."

He paused, and though his eyes were upon Hannah Stanhope's countenance, he was mindful of Reba's start, and abrupt setting down of her cup into its saucer.

"Explain thyself, Friend Richard," said Hannah Stanhope, unfeignedly astonished at such an accusation. "Reba is not wont to disobey the precepts of her faith."

Richard Skinner took up his thread. "I need not remind thee of the steadfast Testimony of Friends against war." He paused again, impressively.

Hannah Stanhope nodded assent. Listening to his unctuous voice, she had steadily averted her eyes meanwhile from her niece's flushed face.

"It will surprise thee, therefore," he continued, with slow deliberation, "to hear that Reba hath not only loitered past the common yesterday afternoon to watch the volunteers at drill, but hath proclaimed aloud, upon the open street, her sympathy for their cause. Nay more, she hath declared that were she youth instead of maid, she would be at drill with them. Does thee need further proof of her disobedient and rebellious spirit, or that she favors wars and fightings?"

Before Reba could defend herself, her aunt raised a quieting hand. "One moment, child. Thee shall have speech, but first I must ask one question. Thee has seen

and heard this thyself, Richard," she said, addressing Skinner, "or hath it been retailed to thee by others?"

"I myself both saw and heard. Therefore I have come to reprove Reba, in a spirit of love, as is Friends' custom, and in thy presence, Friend Hannah, in order that the whole may be known to thee, and that thee, too, may rebuke her, and bring her to a suitably remorseful frame of mind and to avowal of her guilt, and her repentance in open Meeting."

At this Reba could hold her peace no longer.

"Never will I repent, Richard," she cried indignantly. "I am for Independence, and to gain it for our oppressed land, I would see war. Ay, and would give my life. Reprove me as much as thee pleases, thy efforts will be vain." Then to Hannah Stanhope, in pleading tones, "But do not thee reprove me, dearest aunt, I beg of thee, for even thee, much as I love thee, cannot stir me by one hair's breadth from my decision."

"Thee is of a piece with Gilbert Westwood," pronounced Richard, "and I see his influence upon thee in this. He hath himself been admonished of late, in the same matter, and hath been timely dealt with by James Pemberton and others. If he remains solidly fixed in his course, he will become disowned, as is Friends' custom, in such case."

"Gilbert hath naught to do with my opinion," retorted Reba hotly. "I am able of myself to see the right when 'tis before me. Let them disown him if they will, let them disown me also. I care not."

"Never say thee does not care, Reba," said Hannah Stanhope, in grave rebuke. " 'Tis no light thing to be disowned, and no light thing, either, to turn thy back upon the teachings of thy faith."

"I spoke in haste, aunt. To be sure I care, yet some-

thing greater is at stake than disownments, or any narrow teaching. Deeply I feel it, and so, I am sure, doth Gilbert."

"Gilbert is here," announced Richard Skinner, whose eyes, turned to the garden, saw him crossing the grass. "Perhaps he will confess his feeling in this matter."

It was, in fact, for this express purpose that Gilbert Westwood was coming.

Entering with the freedom of a life-long friend and neighbor by the window that opened door-wise upon the piazza, he received the cordial morning greetings of Hannah and Reba Stanhope, and the cool salutation of Skinner with more gravity than was his wont.

Friend Stanhope indicated a chair near her. "Sit here, Gilbert. Thee is always dearly welcome." Thus she gave Richard Skinner to know that what he had just told her had by no means robbed young Westwood of her esteem.

Gilbert's countenance brightened for an instant at the warmth of her manner, but became grave again as he took the offered seat, and began to speak.

"Perhaps, Friend Stanhope, thee and Reba will no longer have a welcome for me here when I tell thee of the path that I have chosen."

His mouth and chin, always resolute, took on firmer, stronger lines, and he braced his shoulders, as though to meet a blow. Nevertheless, he went on unflinchingly. "I have offered myself as a volunteer, Friend Stanhope, and for my espousal of the cause of Independence, I know I shall be disowned."

"Thee knows the lot of a Friend who has been disowned," Hannah reminded him softly.

Gilbert looked neither at Reba, flushing and paling with quick sympathy, nor at Hannah Stanhope, who had given him no clue as yet, as to her attitude toward such

a course as his. Nor did he cast a glance at Richard Skinner, viewing him complacently from his armchair by the window. His dark blue eyes were set on the free sky without, and his answer came low, yet without hesitation.

"I know what my lot must be, and I have come to say farewell to those dear to me as my own kin. I know, and I would not choose it, were the cause less just, less noble than it is. But what right have I, or anyone, be he Quaker or no, to dwell secure and protected, while others struggle and jeopardize their lives and all they own to preserve us as well as themselves from sinful oppression and wicked tyranny that violate the God-given rights of humankind?"

"Thee would fight, then?" spoke Richard Skinner from the window.

"Verily."

"Thee risks much."

"I would risk all."

Richard Skinner smiled blandly. "Thee cares little for the Testimony, it seemeth, Gilbert, but has thee thought of this? When the British come, the chances are vastly in favor of their being victorious. If so, then those who have rebelled against the Crown will be esteemed traitors, and for traitors there will be disgrace, confiscation of their properties, and the gallows-tree."

"Let come what will, I battle for the right."

"A Fighting Quaker, then," pronounced Richard Skinner, folding his palms together.

Gilbert Westwood rose. The summer air, stealing in from the garden, stirred the dark hair upon his neck, and touched his cheek, which depth of feeling had blanched. Above middle height, the youthful strength of his body, apparent in repose, became striking when he

stood. Muscles of iron lay under his garb of grey. His wrists and shapely hands showed power. Sagacity and courage shone in his open countenance. At nineteen, he already possessed a large measure of the poise and strength of purpose of manhood.

"A Fighting Quaker," he repeated inflexibly.

"As am I," cried Reba, as though the words must out.

While Richard Skinner and Gilbert had been speaking, while her aunt had listened giving no hint by word or sign of her personal feelings in the matter, Reba had come to realize more clearly than ever before what her own choice might involve. Yet it did not turn her from her resolution.

She ranged herself beside Gilbert, her cheeks bright rose, her hazel eyes on fire. Believing him her only friend in this regard among those present, she stretched her hand to him in frank comradeship.

He took and held it close.

"As am I," she reiterated in ringing tones.

"Thee needs not raise thy voice, child," was her aunt's placid comment. "'Tis clear enough, without that, to make thee understood. Thee has thy father's spirit, not easy to discipline to quietness, and moderate behavior." In spite of her words, however, there was that in her eye and accents by which Reba was convinced that she was not actually reproved.

That office Richard Skinner undertook.

"Have a care, Reba, of what thee says. Thee is but a maid, and thy opinions, therefore, are of no great moment. Yet have a care. Let Gilbert take what risks he will, but do thee hold thy peace, lest thee brings disownment upon thyself, as I have said before, and trouble upon thy aunt."

At this Hannah Stanhope arose with quiet dignity from the table.

"Gilbert," she said, and laid an affectionate hand upon Westwood's grey sleeve, "thee is the son of my best-loved friend. Dying, she begged that I would always love and cherish thee for her sake. Through many years I have done this, and for as many I have loved thee for thine own sake, too. While Hannah Stanhope lives she will love thee always, give thee welcome always. Yea," she went on, with a whimsical smile into the young face bent gratefully above hers, "even though thee is become a Fighting Quaker, Gilbert, like my good friends, Mary Norris, Clement Biddle, and Benjamin Franklin, and all the rest of those disowned for the same reason." Drawing down his head in motherly fashion, as she ended, she kissed him upon his broad white brow.

Reba looked upon her aunt with dawning hope. "Aunt Hannah," she cried beseechingly, "thee has spoken kindly to Gilbert, and has not rebuked me. I know thee is an established Friend, but tell me, has thee no sympathy in thine inmost heart, for the patriot's cause? Is thee purely neutral, or"—she paused, and then struck boldly on, "is thee all Tory?"

There was a faint twinkle in the brown orbs of the Quakeress as they met the challenging gaze of her pretty niece. "In remembering that thee is thy father's daughter, Reba, thee needs not forget that I am thy father's sister, and though less free of speech than he and thee, I am not less free in spirit, nor do I love tyranny one whit more."

Reba threw her arms precipitately about her aunt's neck, and embraced her fervently. "Aunt Hannah, dear Aunt Hannah," she cried, "I suspect thee is patriot through and through!"

Of this Friend Stanhope made no denial.

Richard Skinner had learned enough. Sedulous in his duty as a Quaker, he brought to the attention of the

overseers of the Women's Meeting, the revolt of Hannah and Reba Stanhope, against the Rules of Discipline and the Testimony.

The overseers came singly at first, to admonish them, but finding them obdurate, Friend Mary Pemberton, and Friend Elizabeth Drinker, duly appointed for the solemn purpose, came together, without loss of time, in softly rustling silken gowns, the one in deepest mauve, the other in pearl color, their white silk bonnets and spotless kerchiefs emanating peace and immaculate purity. Their office was to deal with them.

Over cups of balm tea they spoke long and earnestly, laboring and dealing in a spirit of tenderness and love, as they were required to do.

"We will come again, Hannah," said Mary Pemberton, at last, "before we go so far as to lay thy case, and Reba's, before preparative meeting. We would not testify against thee publicly without giving thee abundant time to reconsider, and repent."

"I thank thee, Mary, and thee, Elizabeth," returned Hannah Stanhope, standing sedately beside the silver tea-urn, that gave forth a cloud of vapor, and a soft hissing. "It needs not that either of thee should come again for such a purpose. I have already pondered the matter solidly. My duty is clear to me, and my mind is fixed. In this crisis, war is justified."

With lifted hands, with shaking of heads, and disapproving swish of silken gowns, Mary Pemberton and Elizabeth Drinker rustled sadly away.

Hannah Stanhope looked after them thoughtfully, as they departed. She had that afternoon broken the associations of a lifetime, for though in every particular, except one, she and Reba were Quakers still, that one had placed them beyond the pale of Friends' Meeting.

In due course they were formally and openly testified against, and when sufficient time had elapsed for them to profess repentance, and ask forgiveness, and reinstatement, without their having done so, they, on the same day as Gilbert Westwood, were formally disowned, and cast out, and their old friends of Bank Meeting knew them no more.

They had laid their first sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Chapter III

The Stanhope windows, facing High Street, were an unending source of interest to Reba, commanding, as they did, a view of well-nigh all the comings and goings of those inhabiting Philadelphia, either as regular citizens, or as transient sojourners.

In her time it was the one long street of the city. Horseback riders followed it on their way to the Middle Ferry across the Schuylkill, and to the pleasant country-seats that lay beyond. Market wagons rumbled over its cobble-stones to carry produce to the Market House where Second Street joined High Street. The Butter Bells of Christ Church rang out across it from Second Street on every Tuesday and Friday evening, to let the townsfolk know that on the following morning they might go to purchase at the market stalls. A constantly changing procession of people and vehicles moved along the wide street, which was lined by handsome houses, and shaded by tall poplar trees. Its flagged sidewalks were dotted along their edge by stepping-blocks, and wooden posts for the hitching of horses.

Reba, with her keen zest for whatever had to do with human life, frequently congratulated herself that she had such a vantage point from which to look out upon the passing show.

On a day in late July, she saw from the parlor windows an unusual procession approaching. A glance was sufficient to apprize her of what was forward.

"See, aunt," she exclaimed," 'tis as Gilbert hath fore-

told. The chief neutrals are being sent away. There rides Ex-Governor John Penn, and after him comes Chief Justice Benjamin Chew. Methinks from their long faces they are none too well pleased to leave town."

With them, as they departed perforce, went many other prominent neutrals, accompanied by their families and household servants. Wagons rolled behind them, piled high with such possessions as might be required in their exile.

"They are good men," replied Hannah Stanhope, coming to look thoughtfully over her niece's shoulder, "men scarce likely to do harm, if they should remain here, yet 'tis just as well that they should be gone, for there are troublous times ahead for us, though Philadelphia has escaped thus far."

Until July of that year, although the city had been the home of the Continental Congress, although grave issues had been discussed within its bounds, weighty decisions reached, and far-reaching responsibilities assumed, by those fearless men, assembled from the separate states, who were determined to protect the Colonies, the city itself had had little actual contact with military operations and alarms. Men had drilled upon commons, and in factory yards, regiments in plenty had passed through on their way to other points, there had been hot feeling, and occasional smashing of Quaker windows, and riding of Loyalists upon the Tory Cart, by hot-blooded Whigs.

Notwithstanding, sloops and schooners had voyaged to and from Philadelphia docks for interchange of wares with Cape Verde, the Madeiras, the West Indies, and domestic ports. Merchandise had passed steadily and peacefully through its usual channels. Social, as well as business life had known no check in activity.

"I see not how anyone can be neutral at such a time,"

was Reba's emphatic expression of opinion. "If one means to do no harm to the city, or to the Colonies, 'tis a small matter to promise to give no aid or comfort to the enemy. Every man should take the Test Oath; should show his colors, and let it be known publicly whether he be Whig or Tory. The Council of Safety do not ask too much when they urge it."

"Thee forgets, Reba, that Friends are forbidden to take oaths of any sort," Hannah Stanhope reminded her, "and many more there be who are fixed in their belief that no man should be compelled to swear that he intends to be honest. 'Tis because of these things that opposition to enforcing the Test Oath is strong."

"They say," declared Reba, quoting Gilbert, " 'twill soon be enforced, nevertheless. Admiral Lord Howe's fleet is on the high seas. On board are General Sir William Howe, and his regulars. Whither bound, none knows, and our General Washington waits till 'tis clear whether it be Philadelphia that they mean to attack, or whether they go south to Charlestown. Meanwhile we wait also, and the neutrals are sent away, and the Tories warned, lest the danger from within our city be as grave as that from without."

"Time was when Philadelphia dwelt in peace," sighed her aunt. "Now Friend looks askance at Friend. We must not forget, child, that there are some who are satisfied with English rule, some who would not have commerce disturbed, they being large merchants, with much at stake. There are men, too, like Joseph Galloway, of disappointed ambitions, and who have deserted the Americans in hope of winning high place in the councils of the enemy."

"If that were all," burst out Reba, turning from the window, "but in Congress itself there are such disagree-

ments as to how matters shall be conducted, who shall command, and how; what shall be supplied, and when! Men, also, who would feather their own nests at the expense of our poor armies! Gilbert saith all these are as sappers and miners from within, making weak the walls of our citadel against the attacks of enemies from without."

"Let us not spend our time in vain talk, Reba," advised Hannah Stanhope, taking up her knitting from a basket on the table, "there are hose to be made, and garments to be sewed, and looms stand ever ready for willing hands to weave stuffs to clothe our patriots."

"I would do that and more, much more," returned Reba in discontent. "While men fight and die, I sit and knit in safety. If I were a man like Gilbert, I might take my share of danger in this crisis."

"Danger will come soon enough," was the calm response, "and 'twill be sufficient to quench thy thirst for it, thee may be sure."

Close enough it seemed when, some days later, a horse foam-bespattered, for he had come hard and fast, galloped into Philadelphia. His rider brought important tidings. The keeper of the lighthouse off the Capes had sighted a fleet of two hundred and fifty sail in the open sea, standing in toward Delaware Bay.

Reba's heart beat fast when Gilbert hurried over and gave the news.

"'Tis Lord Howe's fleet, of course," he told her.

"There are those who will welcome him," said Reba dolefully.

"And those who will resist him to the death."

Gilbert's accents were bold, but his eyes grew anxious as he looked down upon the earnest face lifted to his, where they stood in the hall of the great house. "If the

British enter here, in spite of everything that we can do to prevent them, the city will be no safe or pleasant place for thee, Reba, or for thy aunt, with foes quartered everywhere, and using private property as they please. There will be rough doings. I trust that thee and she will take refuge in one or the other of thy country-seats."

"Nay, Gilbert," came Hannah Stanhope's voice from the doorway, " 'tis kind of thee to have regard for our safety, but we shall stay and bear our portion of the common suffering, and do what we can to minister to the common need. Is it not so, Reba?" Yet she knew what the answer would be before her niece spoke.

"Ay. We are no cowards, aunt and I, that we should flee our posts," was the instant response.

Two days and nights of tension followed. Rumors were conflicting: the fleet was about to enter the bay; it had withdrawn to the open sea; again, it had stood in for the second time for the Capes.

On the afternoon of the third day Reba sat with Debby Norris and her mother on the western piazza of the Norris mansion. Their talk ran on the fleet, and Philadelphia's impending fate.

The prospect from the piazza was across the garden enclosure, with its greenhouses and hot-house frames, its catalpas and willows, its pinks and roses, and tastefully ordered beds of medicinal herbs and rare plants, and away to the palisaded wall, draped with scarlet honeysuckle.

Beyond lay open country, for the Norris house at Chestnut Street and Fifth Street, one of Philadelphia's finest mansions, stood at what was then the farthest western boundary of the city.

Suddenly their quiet converse was disturbed by a

heavy booming of guns, whose insistent reverberations rolled out across the city, drowning all other sounds.

At the ominous warning that it conveyed, the blood forsook Reba's cheeks. Debby sprang startled and wide-eyed to her feet. From Mary Norris' nerveless hand a reel of colored thread dropped, and took its course unheeded across the piazza floor, and away into the shrubbery.

"The alarm guns!" gasped Reba. "The British have passed into the Bay!"

"Our turn at last," cried Debby, snatching at her friend's hand. "Come, Reba, we must see what is forward." And away they went together, leaving Mary Norris grave-faced and silent upon the piazza.

From the front gate that gave upon Chestnut Street, to which the girls ran, they commanded an extensive outlook, and could miss nothing that went on in that vicinity.

Since the hour when the express had ridden in with his disturbing tidings, the Quaker City had been strangely passive until now. But with the sounding of the alarm guns, the streets instantly became filled with uproar.

"There goes Friend Timothy Matlack in hot haste. On his way to the Coffee House, I suppose, to consult with the Council of Safety. They will take measures to defend us," was Debby's comforting opinion.

Reba, only half attending to her words, assented mechanically. Her eyes were caught by a company of volunteers, swinging out of Third Street, too far distant for her to distinguish clearly any one of them. Yet she fancied Gilbert Westwood must be among them. She knew that Congress had commanded four thousand militia to be in readiness to join the Continental Army,

which was marching toward Philadelphia in three divisions; one by way of Reading, one by the Trenton Ferry, and the main body with General Washington at Coryell's Ferry, to unite as occasion might require. Evidently Gilbert's company was called.

Wagons began to hurry by, filled with timorous citizens and their belongings, voluntarily retiring to the seclusion of their farms and country-seats while there was yet time. Shopkeepers clapped up shutters with all possible speed, preparing to secure their valuable merchandise from marauders. Crowds in the street thickened. Bolder citizens gathered on corners and before taverns to discuss the threatening situation. Men, women, and children streamed along, in haste to reach their homes. Countryfolk poured tumultuously toward the upper, middle, and lower ferries across the Schuylkill, fearful lest these sole avenues to their dwellings, be cut off before they were able to reach them.

"Does thee think the patriots will be able to hold back the British, Deb?" breathed Reba, filled with misgivings.

"How can they, at this present?" returned Debby, who had better opportunity to be informed on such matters than her companion. "Congress hath bound General Washington's hands, and he can get neither clothing, food, ammunition, nor any other supplies for his men. They go in shocking rags, scarcely half fed, miserably sheltered, half if not wholly sick. 'Tis a crying shame. Our own Dr. Benjamin Rush, a sincere man and a brilliant, is blind as a mole to General Washington's powers and virtues. He is all for the conceited Gates, and Conway. Even the Adamses, good men, and true, are misled."

Hopeless enough the matter seemed to Reba, leaning upon the gate as they talked.

"The British outnumber us by many thousands," went on Debby, pouring out her discouragement, her handsome brow wrinkled in a troubled frown. "They have every comfort, every provision that our men lack. I know, for mother has told me, and I hear our great men talk around the tea-table in our drawing-room. No, Reba, we cannot win, if the blow falls now. And yet,—and yet,—" she went on determinedly, "win we must."

"Our men are brave, they know what endurance means, for privations have taught them, and I have often heard it said that there are no marksmen like the Americans," asserted Reba, with enthusiasm. "Win they must, as thee has said, *and win they will.*"

But Philadelphia's hour had not yet struck. The afternoon and night crept by, and days followed, and it became evident that the thunderous warning of the alarm guns had been premature.

Lord Howe's fleet, which had made Cape Henlopen on July 30th, and had stood in for Delaware Bay next day, withdrew unexpectedly to the open sea, steered eastward, and on August 1st had completely disappeared. Fears for the city were again awakened some days later by its reappearance before the entrance to the Bay, and it was rumored that a few ships had advanced as far as Reedy Island, but anxieties were once more allayed for the time, by the retreat of the fleet southward to be seen no more.

Before the militia could march, the order for it was countermanded, and Philadelphia relapsed into its former passivity.

"The shoals have stood us in good stead," triumphed Gilbert, as he sat with his friends at the evening hour in the coolness of the garden.

"The shoals, and the islands in the Bay and in the

Delaware River," agreed Reba, "but if the British had had a pilot as familiar with the waters as the best of those who bring in our merchant vessels," she added sagely, "they could easily have passed through to us."

"And landed their troops a bare thirteen miles away. Their ignorance of this has given us security for a while at least," finished Gilbert.

Among those who secretly worked against his countrymen from within was Richard Skinner. A professed Quaker, son of a strictly honorable father, he was neither true at heart to the precepts of the Testimony, nor to the example and teachings of his parent, although he carefully shielded his activities for the Crown behind a pretence of neutrality, and an outward adherence to the tenets of his faith.

A junior member of the substantial firm of Henry Skinner and Son, Shipping Merchants, he was already in a position of some importance in his community. Small craft, schooners, sea-going merchantmen, came and went from the wharf and warehouse on Dock Street, under the guiding hand of his father and himself. They ministered to manifold shipping interests besides their own. Many well-to-do Philadelphia families, the Stanhopes and Westwoods among them, derived a considerable portion of their income from partial or complete ownership of numerous mercantile vessels, and the cargoes that they carried. Exports and imports in a steady stream were sent out and received by the Skinners, and the revenues therefrom were paid over at stated seasons in gold coin, to those who adventured under Henry Skinner's expert advice and guidance.

At present Richard apparently devoted himself with exemplary industry and honesty solely to the duties connected with his father's business. Nevertheless, he was

ambitious and unscrupulous, and was determined to wrest from this crisis in his country's affairs every iota that it could be made to yield to his advantage. Actually he cared nothing for Whig or Tory, but being inwardly convinced that the Crown must triumph, he had linked himself to its interests for the rewards to be obtained thereby.

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Money, ships, and lands, these were as the apple of his eye to him. His stock of the former he hoped to increase considerably by service to the British. The second he intended to add to as occasion afforded. The third he meant to acquire, if possible, through Reba Stanhope.

The handsome townhouse of the Stanhopes, their country-seat, Broadlands, near Gray's Ferry, the grain-bearing acres of Ridge Farm, in the neighborhood of Valley Forge, would become Reba's when she arrived at her majority. He regarded them with envious eyes, and reflected that while Reba, being not yet quite sixteen, was too young for marrying, a year or two would remedy that, and by pressure brought to bear in the meantime, he might be able to drive, if he could not bend her to compliance with his wishes.

For Reba herself he cared nothing, and was perfectly aware of her dislike of himself. There was also the obstacle of her disownment, no professing Friend being permitted to marry another who was disowned, but neither of these would seriously trouble him, provided he could secure her fortune.

He merely waited opportunity to set in motion whatever schemes seemed most likely to bring about his desires.

It was not impossible that, failing to win Reba's consent to marry him, he might be able to prove conclusively her guilty of such rebellious activities against the Crown,

as to lead to the confiscation of her properties. In that case, his own valuable services to the Crown, properly set forth to the officials of His Britannic Majesty, might result in the bestowal of her ships and lands upon himself as a reward.

These were the aims and hopes that he entertained, while Reba went her way in girlish unconsciousness and patriotic fervor.

Chapter IV

Morning dew gemmed the grass in Lancaster, yet Poll, bound girl to Friend Christopher Marshall and his wife, was already upon the road.

She knew of a wagon that would start for Philadelphia with the rising sun, and she must win a place in it by cajolery, or by concealment among its contents, for she had business in the Quaker City which could not wait.

Slipping out of bed therefore, before dawn, she had put on what finery she had, and before she sneaked down the stair, paused to make a grimace at the closed door behind which venerable Christopher Marshall and his good wife Abigail lay sleeping. It was her good-bye to them.

Sixty miles of turnpike stretched between Lancaster and Philadelphia, and Poll had bewailed the distance bitterly when she had been compelled to leave the latter in June of that year with her master's family. Friend Marshall, advancd in years, not yet recovered of a severe pleurisy, and hence unable to serve upon the Council of Safety as he had been accustomed to do with zeal and fidelity, had been ordered by his physician to seek the more country-like surroundings of Lancaster.

Poll, a lover of city streets, and wanderings on roads around Philadelphia, missed her old haunts, and got back to them now and then, when and how she could.

A thorn in the side she was to Friend Marshall, who, excellent and able man, had his definite ideas as to what constituted right and proper behavior. But Poll, indulged

and forgiven over and over again for her rovings and misdemeanors by a too soft-hearted and indulgent mistress, continued to come and go as she listed, disappearing for days together, and reappearing as nonchalantly as she had gone forth today without excuse or apology.

Her mother, a servant, and a rover like herself, upon her deathbed had given her to the arms of Abigail Marshall, who had accepted the charge, and done her best for the wayward child, who was singularly devoid of gratitude or affection for her benefactors. Ready enough was Poll to wheedle and tease to gain her ends, but to instruction or kindly appeal or advice she turned a deaf ear. Nay, further, she was surpassingly impertinent, and therefore she flung her grimace this morning at master and mistress alike.

The fresh morning air, the red sun peeping up through the trees on an eastern hill, singing of robins and song-sparrows among the boughs, were naught to Poll, stealing cautiously out from the kitchen door, and away to the winding turnpike. She would have given them all joyfully for a single whiff of Philadelphia's air, however heavy with heat and dirt in its rising from Philadelphia paving-stones.

Yet Lancaster was not without its advantages to her, as she knew full well, for it was what transpired in Lancaster and thereabouts, that gave her promise of many a profitable and exciting jaunt to Philadelphia in the future.

Nimble-footed on errands of her own, though slow as snail on those for master or mistress, Poll covered quickly the half-mile that put her well out of sight of her master's house.

On a tree stump by the roadside she took seat to wait for the expected wagon. It was not long in coming, and

she perceived to her satisfaction that the driver was not the farmer himself, whom she might have had difficulty in persuading to give her a lift, but his farm-hand, pleasantly disposed toward her, and open to her blandishments.

Poll rose, and planted herself in the road, squarely in the way of the oncoming vehicle, hands on hips, impudent face lifted, jibe on lip.

"Slow poke," she hailed the grinning farm-hand, when he had drawn willing rein before her, "I'm for a ride with you. Let me up, and give room."

Over the wheel she went, and into a place beside him on the driver's seat, taking no offence at the jovial dig in the ribs that he gave her with his elbow, as she was settling herself comfortably.

"Poll's off again, eh?" he commented, when the horse's hoofs began to beat the road. "Where now?"

"Where I will, Jake Ashe, and that's no business of yours. It's luck for you if I ride with you. How far be you going with your grain sacks?"

"So far as I like, and no business of yours," he retorted, with a side-glance to see how she took it.

A cuff on the ear was his reward. "No need to ask, with grain sacks in the wagon, and Jake Ashe on the seat. That means mill first, and tavern as fast as may be after," she giggled.

A guffaw to her giggle, he shook out the reins, and with such pleasantries Poll's day began.

Fortune favored her. At the tavern an eastward riding militia-man, on furlough, took her up, and Poll, dearly loving a uniform, and the dazzle of brightly polished brass buttons, clung to his waist with such good-will, that they made boon companions, till the roofs and spires of Philadelphia greeted their eyes in the afternoon of the next day.

A quarter-mile before they reached Middle Ferry, they parted, he to ride northward, she to make her way into the city less conspicuously, for now she must be circumspect until the business that had called her these sixty miles away from Lancaster was transacted.

" 'Tis well you are no Tory, baggage," he declared, as he helped her to alight, "else had I shaken you, long since. But as 'tis, a good day to you, and come a-horseback again with me."

Poll laughed and nodded. "That will I. Look for me on the roads."

And so they took their separate ways.

The sun sank in pillars of fire beyond the Schuylkill, and night came down to hang thick shadows in and around the covered and arched ways that led on either hand of the State House to the wings that flanked it.

More than a year ago, on July Fourth of 1776, in a chamber of that State House, a little band of courageous men had taken the tremendous risk of signing the Declaration of Independence. From the tower of that State House, in July of the same year, it had been read aloud by John Nixon to the populace, assembled on the gravel outside of the State House doors.

Debby Norris, standing on a wheelbarrow by her mother's garden fence, and peeping over the palisades, had listened to the momentous words that were to set the Colonies free, and to make of the Americans a great nation. She jotted down in her diary: "I distinctly heard the words of that instrument read to the people. It took place a little after twelve at noon, and they then proceeded down the street to read it at the Court House. It was a time of fearful doubt, and great anxiety with the people, many of whom were appalled at the boldness of the measure, and the first audience of the Dec-

laration was neither very numerous, nor composed of the most respectable class of citizens."

Now, on this August evening in 1777, there lurked under the arches that led to the left wing of the building, one of those secret emissaries of the Tories, with whom the patriots found it so difficult to cope.

It was a mere girl, of about fifteen, the boldness of whose eyes the darkness hid, and whose too conspicuous raiment was made dun-colored by the gloom. She kept herself well concealed, and waited with a motionless patience scarcely to be expected in one of her years and type.

Almost an hour had passed since, on her arrival at this rendezvous, she had slipped into the thickest of the shadows, yet in that time, her position once chosen, she had scarcely stirred.

It was uncommon for anyone to pass under these arches after nightfall. There were gravelled paths beyond the wings, more open to the observation of the patrolling watch, and hence safer for those infrequent pedestrians who might be abroad in this quarter at the western edge of the city.

At length her patience was rewarded. A man, in the garb of a Quaker, his low broad-brimmed hat tipped forward somewhat to shield his face, his head bent, to still further guard it from chance recognition, came at leisurely pace out of Delaware Fifth Street, and as though walking in quiet meditation, passed along Chestnut Street until he had reached that wing of the State House where the girl was hidden under the covered way.

Turning there, he scanned rapidly the approaches from every quarter, and finding himself the sole passenger thereabouts at that moment, he went without further hesitation to the place of rendezvous.

A faint rustle, where the shadows hung deepest, told him that the one he sought was there before him. He proceeded in the direction of the sound.

"Poll," he said in guarded undertones.

"Poll's here," came back as cautiously. "Been here a'most an hour, by clock, Mister Skinner."

Richard Skinner ignored the implied reproach for the tardiness of his coming, and went at once to the business that had brought him.

"What has thee found of value, in Lancaster, Poll, since last I spoke with thee?"

"Friends of the States of America," the girl pronounced the words contemptuously, "set like a vise for the Test Oath, but a plenty as much against it as ever, I overheerd my master, old Christopher Marshall say to mistress."

" 'Tis the same everywhere, since first 'twas agitated," commented Skinner indifferently.

"But none passes through Lancaster now, stranger or no, that's not hauled afore Captain McCullough to be examined respecting the Test, and if a body refuses, it's jail for him, straight away," responded she.

"Cease thy play, Poll, and give me what's up thy sleeve," commanded Richard Skinner with a touch of impatience. "Thee has not taken a two days' jaunt from Lancaster to tell naught of greater importance to the British cause than these things."

"Well, then," she confessed, drawing close to his ear, "I've somewhat worth while for you, but not in my sleeve." She fumbled among the ample folds of her linsey-woolsey skirt until she had found a capacious pocket, and turned it wrongside-out. It was double, and loosely stitched together. With deft fingers, she began to rip the two thicknesses apart.

Skinner watched her intently as she worked.

The outer pocket freed, she held it out to him. "Writ on the inside of that," she announced, with pride in her accomplishment, "are names,—names of disaffected ones; Quakers, Mennonites, countryfolk and townsfolk of Lancaster, who love the Tories. They'll serve General Howe when he comes, every way they can. Meantime they'll make it hard for the rebels. Not a scrap of hay, or oats, or wood, or green stuff will they sell 'em. Old Chris Marshall could get naught to feed his horse, and 'twould have starved long since, if mistress hadn't brought oats and hay with her from town, bought last winter, before they went to Lancaster, because of master's ails."

"Poll, Poll, thee is a jewel," murmured Richard Skinner, delightedly stowing away the invaluable record.

The satisfaction in his words and act was not lost on Poll. She bridled with pleasure, and flung at him pertly, "So think I."

"Go thy way straight back to Lancaster, then, and see what more thee can do."

"That I will," promised Poll readily, but did not start, nevertheless. Instead she leaned still nearer, and presented a wide open palm to him.

Richard Skinner understood the significant gesture. "Thee never forgets thy dues, does thee, Poll?" he observed, and felt in his purse.

"Nay, why should I?" returned she shortly, and tried the silver that he had given her with her teeth. Finding it good coin, as she had expected it would be, yet neglecting not to test its genuineness shrewdly, she knotted it in a corner of her pocket. The coins represented no great sum, but to the bound girl, with whom money was scarce, and hard to come by, it was a sufficient reward for what she had brought him.

"Off with thee now, wench," he bade her, and tarrying no longer, she slipped through the nearest arch, along the back of the building, and away toward the negro burying ground, to lose herself among the trees.

Making sure first that she was well away, and himself unwatched, Richard Skinner seized a favorable opportunity, and proceeding to one of the open walks, went quickly across State House Yard, slowly along Chestnut Street, and thence once more, in profitable meditation, strolled out of sight along Fifth Street.

Despite his instructions to her that she should return immediately to Lancaster, it was far from Poll's intent to go until she had sipped at least a day's fill of pleasure in the city, and five days, and almost five nights had intervened since she had left her master's doorstep before she reappeared at the kitchen door.

It was not yet cockcrow. She tried the door stealthily, but it was barred.

Balked in her desire to slip in unobserved, yet determined to enter, nevertheless, she knocked; not loud at first, but with increasing force, when Betty, the negro woman, did not answer, ending at last with violent kicks upon the thick door.

Aroused from sleep by the noise below, Friend Christopher Marshall turned indignantly upon his pillow. "Mammy," he protested to his wife, who was on her way to the stairhead, "will thee never have done with that worthless vagabond wench? Gone this five days without permission, she rouses us at dead of night to let her in. She should be well whipped for her impudence, and locked up. I lose patience with thee because of thy foolish forbearance."

"She has come back repentant, Christopher, I hope. At least I must give her one chance more." Abigail

"Off with thee now, wench," he bade her.

Marshall, benevolent of speech and deed, grieved by the misconduct of her charge, was resolved to go in person to open to the culprit, rather than to summon Betty for the purpose from her heavy slumbers in the loft.

"Nay, now, Abigail, thee must not go down," insisted her husband, but she was already out of earshot.

In the moonlight, before the kitchen entrance, Poll was preparing to give yet another lusty kick, just as the door yawned.

"Fie, Poll! How can thee do so!" remonstrated Abigail Marshall, her rosy countenance, encircled by her ruffled nightcap, gently reproachful. "Thee has been gone five days without leave, or asking, and now thee comes at night, with monstrous uproar, disturbing thy poor master, who ails, and who can ill endure thy wanton behavior. But get thee to thy bed at once, child, and I will speak with thee further in the morning."

Pushing saucily past her mistress, without the least reply, Poll ran none too softly up the stair, and on to her own quarters, as she had been bidden.

A little room, yet a comfortable and pleasant one, under the eaves, was hers, and she dropped upon her husk mattress willingly enough, for she was tired from her journeyings.

Before she pulled the clean sheet over her shoulders, she rubbed gleefully between her palms the coins that Richard Skinner had given her.

"Silver," she chuckled, "and spying, and plaguing old Chris Marshall till he's like to burst himself, and the rare sport of pounding up mistress! Riding a-horseback, jogging in farm carts, and more silver to come! A jewel, I be, as Mister Richard Skinner says!"

Chapter V

TRAMP and shuffle of many feet, hoot and yells, and loud shouts, broke the afternoon quiet of High Street.

A rabble of men and boys, armed with stones and stout sticks, surrounded a moving cart. Upon it stood three men, bound hand and foot, and two of these were Quakers.

Cudgels pounded lustily on cart sides. Fists made din on pots, pans, and old kettles. Above screech of fife, and beat of drum, rose hoarse voices, shouting ribald jests, insults, and threats. Mingled with these were furious cries of "Down with the traitors! Down with the Broadbrims! Ride 'em on the Tory Cart! Ride 'em on the Tory Cart!"

The hats of the unfortunate victims were battered and soiled with mud, and their garments ripped and torn by the hands of the mob. Blood streamed freely from the forehead of one; a swollen and bruised cheek, which had suffered a vicious blow from a flying stone, disfigured another; the third, hit in the leg by a cudgel, stood upright with difficulty.

Shocked by the sight, Reba shrank back from the parlor window to which she had been drawn by the uproar.

She retreated none too soon, for at that moment, a stone, wide of its mark, crashed through the windowpane above her, shivering the glass to atoms. It fell with

a sharp tinkle, part on the brick pavement without, part on the polished waxed floor within.

The breaking glass, and her startled outcry, drew the attention of an impudent boy in the crowd. Seeing her white face through the window, he thrust out a thick red tongue at her, bawling, "Quakers! Quakers! Make 'em take the Test Oath! Maids and women, too!"

Among the mob was Poll. She, too, caught sight of Reba, and the strong sweet face, in its frame of bright hair, the slender figure, in delicate summer garb of pale rose-colored muslin, roused her to that swift unreasoning malice, and desire to wreak some spite upon her, such as she had always felt whenever she had seen her hitherto.

Many a time in the past, compelled to attend unwillingly upon Bank Street Meeting by her master and mistress, she had spent the time which others gave to spiritual meditation, in regarding this young Quaker maid with envious eyes, taking stock of the things possessed by her which she herself lacked.

Today afforded an opportunity not to be let pass.

Poll drew close to a man in the press, a blacksmith, as shown by his leathern apron, and the hammer in his hand. She spoke quickly, and in an undertone.

Her words had immediate and electrical effect. The blacksmith, rapidly gathering together the handful of apprentices who had come with him from his forge, rushed from the on-sweeping mob, and made straight for the Stanhope door.

Poll's object gained, she went on with the rabble.

Standing shaken and amazed in the parlor, the broken glass at her feet, Reba heard the front door hurled violently open. Before she could reach the hall, to ascertain the cause, she was confronted by the blacksmith and his

apprentices. The apprentices ranged themselves agressively inside the threshold, while the blacksmith came forward.

"We're told that Quaker desks and drawers holds Tory secrets these days, miss," roared the blacksmith, "and we've come to have a look through yours."

"We are Quakers, but no Tories," declared Reba, instantly, her eyes fixed indignantly upon the intruders, "but were we both, by what right does thee and thy men break into a peaceful home in rough, unmannerly fashion?"

She spoke boldly, yet quaked inwardly, for she was alone in the house, Hannah Stanhope being away, spending the afternoon with a sick friend, and the maids set free to go where they would until the supper hour.

"Right enough, in times like these, when we must know who's friends, and who's foes. There's many a smooth-spoked Quaker that makes a show of none but peaceful doings, that's hand in glove with the British. 'Tis said you're one of 'em. We'll make sure."

His face, covered with a three days' stubble of unshaven black hair, was turned to the great mahogany secretary, standing tall and handsome against the farther wall. Its large plain doors, and drop-leaf desk-front closed in its drawers and numerous pigeon-holes, and their suspected contents.

The afternoon sunlight revealed to the seeking eye no more than the rarely beautiful grain and ruddy mellowness of tone of its six broad front panels.

The blacksmith took a step in its direction, hammer in fist, rapping out, "There be five locks to yon big desk. Let's have the keys, miss, if you don't want them panels broke by this hammer."

Reba stiffened. "There is but one key to them all. Thee sees it in the centre lock. We have nothing to con-

ceal. Search, if thee chooses, though thee has no warrant for such a proceeding; else would thee be quick to show it. 'Tis an insult to innocent and defenceless women that thee is here, and be thee sure that I will make thy doings known to Friend Timothy Matlack, before the day is done."

"Many a one as claims to be innocent has been found guilty. The Council o' Safety's to be judge o' that. Matlack'll be first to thank me, if I've found a Tory's nest here."

"We are no Tories," reiterated Reba firmly. "We are patriots, as thee will find."

Unconvinced by her repeated denials, the blacksmith opened the desk, and proceeded to snatch out the contents of this drawer, and that pigeon-hole, shuffling them clumsily over.

His comrades, peering curiously over his shoulder, saw him make havoc with Hannah Stanhope's neat packages of household accounts, letters, family documents, and other important papers.

"I make naught of 'em," announced the blacksmith, shoving them together. His skill in reading went little beyond the first page of a hornbook, and the multitude of strange words, that he here encountered, staggered and confounded him.

"Hold aprons up," he commanded his apprentices brusquely. "We'll have 'em all away to Timothy Matlack, as is able to find out whether or no there's Tory secrets among 'em. He's a schoolmaster, as well as Secretary to Council. He'll know."

Each apprentice in turn presenting his leathern apron, he flung into it a portion of the mass of papers that he had decided might be of suspicious character.

Heartsick, and deeply troubled for her Aunt Hannah's

sake, as well as for her own, Reba made one determined plea. "Prithee be careful of them, that none be lost. There be some among them that can never be replaced." One which she had in mind was the great Penn deed, given to her ancestor by William Penn, an ancient yellowed parchment, sealed with huge red seals.

"We make no promises, miss," was the curt answer.

"I cry shame on ye, everyone, for rogues, who use zeal as a cloak to rifle private desks, and bully helpless women," cried Reba, exasperated beyond all bounds. "If such as ye be patriots, then is our cause lost at the start."

Her figure blocked egress from the room into the hallway. The blacksmith, about to sweep her out of the way, paused at her accusation. His red face turned purple, and he snorted angrily. "Packed full o' zeal we be, my men and me, to ferret out treason, my young miss, but we be neither rogues nor thieves, that I vow. I be Isaac Huntoon, an honest man, as be every apprentice here. Ye may be patriots, as ye claim, but I was told, a moment since by Christopher Marshall's Poll, that here was a Quaker house as might have meat for the Council o' Safety, and that's why we're here."

"The girl is a mischief-maker, and spoke falsely," retorted Reba. "But go with these papers. Lay them before the Council, and have our innocence proved. I will go, too, and Friend Matlack will heed me, and will reprove thee. Of that I am confident."

She stepped aside, and waved them forward with a most un-Quakerlike gesture, as if to sweep the house of them.

Then up the stairs she ran to get her sunshade on, and be with Timothy Matlack before them. Not for a second did she stop to question whether it would be esteemed a proper course for a maid, least of all one

of her years, to go on such an errand to the Coffee House, where the Council was wont to assemble. Her sole thought was the preservation of the family papers from irreparable loss or destruction.

Fleet-footed, she far outdistanced Isaac Huntoon and his companions, and was at the door of the London Coffee House, where Front Street crosses High, while they were still more than a block away.

Arrived at the open door of the inn, courage suddenly failed her. Merchants and soldiers, coming and going over its threshold, with never a sign of a petticoat among them, brought her to a sense of the unusualness of her procedure. Now that she was here, to enter alone was almost more than she could summon resolution to do, in spite of all there was at stake.

She hesitated, her foot upon the sill, trembling a little at the boldness of what she had undertaken. The steady tramp of feet coming down High Street reminded her that she must act quickly, if she would gain Timothy Matlack's ear before Isaac Huntoon and his men arrived. It was enough. She passed within the doorway, and into the dark passage.

Dazzled by the swift transition from outer brightness of summer sunlight to inner shadow of the inn passage, she came, unseeing, into collision with a young man, about to leave the inn.

"Reba," he exclaimed, and caught at her arm. "What does thee here?" Astonished at meeting her in this place, he tightened his arresting hand, and repeated, "What does thee here?"

"Gilbert! 'Tis thee! Am I not thankful! Take me quickly to Timothy Matlack. Our great desk hath been searched and rifled. Our papers are taken. The ruffians are bringing them to the Council. They accuse us of being

Tories. Quick, quick! I must be with Friend Matlack before them."

She poured out her words urgently, pulling at his sleeve with her free hand.

Gilbert led her forward immediately. "Quiet thyself, Reba," he soothed her. "This way. By good fortune, Friend Matlack is still here. In another moment he might have been gone."

In the room where the Council of Safety held its meetings, Timothy Matlack, schoolmaster and Free Quaker, was putting the finishing touches to a secretarial report.

Reba Stanhope was known to him. He lifted his grave and somewhat stern countenance from his work, and gave strict attention to her swiftly told story. By the time Isaac Huntoon thumped with his knuckles upon the doorpost to announce his presence, he had heard her through.

"Hark ye, Isaac Huntoon," he greeted him austerely, before the blacksmith had opportunity to open his mouth, or to show his gleanings, "I learn that thee has exceeded the bounds of decent and orderly behavior, by breaking into and searching the houses of peaceful citizens. Does thee not know that for such an offence thee can be jailed?"

With dropped jaw, Isaac Huntoon stared at the Secretary. This rebuke at the very outset, came as a dash of cold water to his ardor, yet he kept his wits.

"I be told that they were Tories," he contested sturdily, and beckoned his men in. "Here be the papers. See for yourself, sir."

Timothy Matlack gave not so much as a glance at the contents of the laden aprons. "Thee will take these, and restore them to their place," he dictated, "making no manner of delay. And do thee, and thy fellows, bear

solidly in mind henceforth that there is to be no searching of houses, except by express command of the Council of Safety, and by officers regularly and orderly appointed by them. Moreover, Hannah Stanhope and her niece are patriots, disowned by their Meeting because of it. Therefore thy offence hath been doubly serious. I advise thee, Isaac Huntoon, that thee does not permit thyself in future to be swept out of bounds of right and reason by the unbridled passions of a mob."

Crestfallen and abashed, and the more so, because in his zeal he had meant well, and had expected commendation for patriotism, instead of censure for rashness, the blacksmith whirled himself about, and without further words, tramped off with his apprentices.

Timothy Matlack, having administered justice, applied himself to his interrupted report, briefly disclaiming Reba's gratitude. "'Tis the business of the Council of Safety to see that no wrong is done in the name of right," he said.

"I will go home with thee, Reba," offered Westwood, when they stood together in the street. "There may be rudeness shown thee by these rough men, if thee should be alone when they reach thy house with the papers."

But it was a sheepishly apologetic group that came with its leader to restore what they had authoritatively whisked away a short while before.

"We be honest men, mistress, I do assure you," blurted out Isaac Huntoon to Hannah Stanhope, who was now returned. "'Twas overzeal must be our excuse."

"Let it not lead thee too far astray, friend, in future," was her sole rebuke.

Having superintended the pouring out of the contents

of the aprons upon the library table, and having waved his apprentices forth, Isaac Huntoon tarried to look down upon the tumbled disorganized mass of papers.

"A fine mess we've made for ye, mistress, and you, miss," he stammered remorsefully. "And from naught but overzeal! But take the word of Isaac Huntoon, that if ever it comes his way to do either of ye a good turn, to make up for't, he stands foursquare to do it."

Which was by no means the consummation of her spiteful suggestion that Poll had foreseen, or desired.

Chapter VI

For Gilbert Westwood, the hour of farewell had come. The Shirt Battalion, to which he belonged, had at last been called to join General John Sullivan, on his way from Hanover in New Jersey, to meet the Commander-in-Chief near Neshaminy Creek, close to Coryell's Ferry across the Delaware.

He wore the grey linen hunting-shirt that had given to the battalion its name. It fell, long and fringed, over linen breeches, fastened gaiter-fashion about the legs. His waistcoat and cap were of leather. This was the garb that, in the absence of uniform, General Washington most favored for his men.

There was small outward trace of the Quaker in Gilbert now, except in a certain steadfastness of mien that went not amiss with the military carriage which daily drill had given.

He lifted the iron latch upon his father's garden gate that gave upon the covered alley, and opening the gate directly opposite his own, stepped into the garden at the back of the Stanhope house, where Reba sat in the coolness of the twilight with her aunt.

The elder woman was using the last of the day upon a pair of nearly finished clocked hose, her practised fingers being able to carry on her knitting to perfection, even in the waning light.

Reba was unemployed, her eyes fixed upon the full moon, rising deep golden above the poplar trees at the

garden's end. Scent of honeysuckle and rose, of jessamine and heliotrope, were sweetly mingled and drawn to her by falling dew, and evening air.

It was the hour at which friend visited friend, and welcome was assured.

On many an evening such as this, Gilbert had crossed their greensward, to enjoy their companionship. The thought that, going forth to battle as he was, he might, perhaps, come hither no more, cost him a keen pang.

The click of the iron latches, as they were lifted one after the other, gave notice of his approach, and Reba's eyes turned from the moon, to smile a welcome to him.

"We have been waiting for thy coming, Gilbert, and for the news of the day," she said.

His garb furnished more than a hint of what that news had been, and what its significance to themselves, and his words verified her premonition, although Westwood did not plunge without preliminaries into the chief reason for his coming.

"At last His Excellency, General Washington, knows whither Lord Howe's fleet is bound. An express from the Continental Congress hath brought him word that the British fleet hath entered Chesapeake Bay, steering for the Head of Elk, in Maryland."

"And that means?" inquired Reba quickly.

"An attempt to take Philadelphia by way of Wilmington."

"A roundabout route," observed Hannah, folding her knitting, and putting it down upon the bench beside her.

"Under foolish advice, or by faulty judgment, Friend Stanhope," pronounced Gilbert decidedly. "A journey by water, of weeks instead of days, a march of days instead of hours, by taking the Chesapeake route, in place of

entering the Delaware. So says everyone familiar with both approaches."

Not until eighty years after was it learned from long concealed documents come to light at last in England, that the suggestion to proceed by way of the Chesapeake had been made to General Howe by the traitor General Charles Lee. A letter in Lee's handwriting, and filed in the family archives of Sir Henry Strachey, secretary to the Howes, under the heading of "Mr. Lee's plan," demonstrates fully Lee's treachery and the reason for General Howe's course.

"The time to act for the defence of Philadelphia has come," continued Gilbert. "Our battalion has been called. We join General Washington at once, and march with him to intercept the British when they land at Elkton in Maryland.

Elation was in his voice, a fiery zeal in his dark blue eyes. The Quaker was lost in the patriot, eager for defence of country.

He held out his hand to Friend Stanhope, who had been as near to him always as blood kin. "This is good-bye," he said, and his voice shook. It was his first parting from home and friends.

"My father," he went on, almost inaudibly, for every word cost him pain, "thee will not let him be too lonely, Friend Stanhope. He is old, and grieves to have me go."

"Nay, Gilbert. We will see to him. He shall feel the affection of his friends and neighbors. Reba and I will cheer him."

"With our best endeavors," Reba assured him, her eyes swimming in the brightness of sudden tears.

Gilbert dared not stay to see them fall. He closed his strong fingers over hers in a swift pressure.

"God keep you both safe," he said, and hastened to the gate.

"And thee, Gilbert," called Hannah softly across the perfumed air.

Reba could not trust herself to speak. She stood with hands clasped at her breast, and watched him go. The sound of the latch as it fell with the gate's closing seemed the sign and seal of the end of their happy childhood.

She was to see him once again, however, before he met the foe.

It was on a Sabbath morning, August 24th. General Washington judged best to lead his assembled army through Philadelphia, on his way to the Head of Elk, to reassure its inhabitants, and to stir enthusiasm for the cause.

Front Street, and Chestnut Street, along which he must pass, were agog, as was the whole of Philadelphia, for that matter, except for those who, belonging to the Society of Friends, turned their eyes sedulously away from suggestions of war.

Those who did not gather along the line of march from sympathy and enthusiastic ardor, did so from curiosity and intent to ridicule. Churches had empty pews that day, but none cavilled at it, and had they done so, it would have availed them nothing.

It is true that Quaker meeting-houses were unusually well filled, Quaker blinds were drawn, and even Quaker shutters firmly closed in protest against such ungodly doings. Nevertheless, there were Quaker youths, and Quaker maids, who took the risk of disownment, and stayed away from meeting, to join the crowds that thronged the curbs, or leaned from the open windows of non-Quaker friends, to catch first sight of the approaching procession.

Reba could not trust herself to speak.

Reba begged of her aunt that she might go to the Norris mansion, to see the sight with Debby, for it must pass directly under the Norris windows, and Friend Stanhope did not say her nay. That she would have a last glimpse of Gilbert among the marching men was in the thoughts of both.

"Thee knows, dear child," said Hannah, "that were it otherwise with us, had we not been cast out, I would attend meeting this morning; and in that case, thee would go also. Yet I am well aware that thy heart would have been on Chestnut Street, and not in the quiet meditations of the sanctuary. Well—I will let thee go."

"Will thee not come, too, to see our men, and General Washington? And, oh, Aunt Hannah, they say that the brave young Frenchman, General Lafayette, is to be among them. Does thee not wish to see him? I know thee does. Confess it."

Friend Stanhope was not minded to commit herself, however. She only said, "Go, child; but wear thy waterproof cloak, and thy goloshes, for it pours."

Reba looked ruefully out upon the rain-swept streets. "That it does. Is it not unfortunate? I fear 'twill drench our poor men."

But the sun was out when the first loud huzzas of boys and men on Front Street demonstrated to Reba and Debby, stationed at one of the drawing-room windows, on the second floor of the Norris mansion, that the army was close at hand. In a moment more it swung into view, around the corner, and into Chestnut Street.

At its head, and side by side, rode two men, on proudly stepping chargers. They sat their mounts superbly.

The elder of these, tall, nobly proportioned, of dignified and soldierly carriage, and wearing a blue and buff

uniform, and laced hat, was General Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the American Army.

The younger, a man of scarcely twenty-one years, wore the white uniform of a French officer. His head was carried gallantly. His small eyes were filled with living fire. Finely cut, sensitive, dashing face, curving brows, large well-bowed mouth, slender pointed nose, and delicate nostrils, revealed the sympathetic, responsive nature that had brought him here from honors and a beloved young wife in France, to fling himself heart and soul as a volunteer, without pay, into the American struggle for freedom.

Reba, leaning far out, that she might not lose sight too quickly of these impressive figures, heard Mary Norris speaking behind her. "How soon he has won his way with us, this young French noble, the Marquis de Lafayette! Today he rides beside our Washington, at the head of our troops. In July he was compelled to stand waiting in the street, with Baron de Kalb, and a half dozen other officers, before the doors of Congress, while his offer to place himself and his sword at the service of our country was taken in to Mr. Lovell. Only to have sent out to him the insulting reply, that we already had too many foreign mercenaries on our shores, and that we desired neither him nor his companions!"

"Mother! Can that be possible?" exclaimed Debby astounded.

"I had it from Mr. Lovell himself," attested Mary Norris. "He bore witness, in telling me of it, that to this discourteous treatment the Marquis sent in a note, dignified and cold in tone, stating that he had come at great sacrifice, to offer himself as a volunteer, and neither asked, nor would receive pay for his services. After twenty-four hours or more deliberation by Congress, the

offer of himself and the Baron was accepted. The rest were to have their expenses paid back to France. It was not until he attended a banquet some days later, and met General Washington, however, that he was welcomed with cordiality."

"And now he marches with our army," said Debby. "His fine uniform contrasts sharply with the hit-and-miss outfit of our soldiers in the ranks."

"Yet his spirit is the same," answered Reba instantly, for one glance at his face had shown her that.

Marching in single column came the ten thousand men who constituted the whole of Washington's army. Not by beauty of ordered line, nor by precision of step, did these champions of liberty show their animating spirit, for they lacked, as yet, the training that was to be given them later by that king of drill-masters, Baron von Steuben. Nor was it to be seen in their bearing, for few even carried their heads erect. It was a something that emanated from them as they strode forward, a sphere of an invincible determination toward a lofty purpose, that passed out through the thin veil of the flesh.

Their boot-soles had long since been worn away. Their garments, versicolored, and stained by wear and weather, and hanging upon many of them in tatters, bore eloquent testimony to what these men had already endured. The best dressed among them wore the hunting-shirt and trousers, of white, or grey, or brown linen. Their hats were at varying angles. But there was uniformity in two particulars: each hat was decked with a small branch of living green, and the fluttering flags in the hands of the standard bearers were the Stars and Stripes, newly conceived emblem for a new-born nation, one short year before.

Defeat, struggle, privation, untold miseries might lie

before them in the days to come, but their souls were set on final victory, and their look was a long look forward, beyond day, or year, or generation.

Young though she was, Reba sensed it, sensed the indomitable spirit, and its shining forth. She could hear the rustling of the green foliage in their headgear, could hear the steady tramp of their marching feet, was stirred to the core by the lusty cheers that greeted each passing regiment, each battalion, but the tears in her eyes made a mist of the glittering gun-barrels, and a blur of the passing forms.

In the rush of her emotion, she would have missed seeing Gilbert, had not Debby whispered in time, "Here comes the Shirt Battalion,—our own men, Reba! Out with your handkerchief, quick! We must cheer them on their way!"

Hurriedly Reba brushed the blinding drops from her lids. Swiftly she ruled herself, and wreathed her face in a smile, to give Gilbert courage, if he should look her way. Her gaze fixed upon him, as if to draw his eyes to hers, she waited.

He lifted his head, and saw her there, pure, virginal, robed in gauzy white, her red-gold hair an aureole round her speaking face.

Courageous smile met courageous smile, and with the same handkerchief with which she had dried her tears, Reba waved him on.

The playmate of her infancy, the friend and comrade of her carefree girlhood, was marching away from her, and the peace that the old times had held, to scenes of war, and a life-and-death struggle for a high principle. Her long trust in him, her deep affection for him, her unshakable confidence that he would bear himself well and bravely, went with him to the issue.

And she,—what could she do, while he was away,—nay while the struggle lasted, whether or no he lived or died?

Today he was strong, well clothed, well fed, vigorous. How long would he be so? Not he alone, but others? Already before her eyes, that Sabbath morning, had passed a living panorama of human suffering, human need, soul triumphing over flesh.

"Dear Aunt Hannah," she said in low and sober voice, a little later, when she had returned to where Friend Stanhope sat in meditation with the opened Scriptures before her, "Gilbert hath gone in earnest. Tomorrow I must begin to sew, to knit, to weave, with all my might. Our men stand in cruel want of the things that only women can provide."

Chapter VII

The ship *Martha Brooks,* returned from her profitable cruise to the West Indies, lay at anchor at her dock, in a creek, before the spacious warehouse of Henry Skinner, on the Delaware River front.

Sails spread wide and white to catch the breezes of heaven on her late voyage, were now closely furled, and her tall masts, with their crossing yards, showed black against the September morning sky.

Cargo of hemp, and jute, and molasses, and the various other commodities, which her captain had taken in southern ports in exchange for the barrel staves, salt fish, grain, and tobacco, that had gone out with her, was being rapidly transferred to cool dark spaces within the warehouse, under the supervision of Elkanah Jones, careful and reliable shipping clerk, long time in the service of the Skinners.

Serene satisfaction, such as came to the Quaker merchant, when business enterprises went well, filled Henry Skinner, at the successful termination of this latest cruise of the *Martha Brooks.*

The amounts due in gold, to those who adventured under his guidance, would be especially welcome in this crisis of the country's affairs, for though Philadelphians as well as those elsewhere, followed the instructions of the Continental Congress, and used the Continental bills issued by that body, in their daily purchases in shop or market, nevertheless, everyone realized that if their city should be occupied by the British, that none but hard

money would be accepted, or allowed to circulate, by the victors.

It was in view of this contingency, perhaps not far distant, that Hannah Stanhope, with the prudence natural to her, was proceeding down the tree-lined High Street, to obtain such monies as were coming to herself and her niece, at this date, from their mercantile and shipping properties.

Reba, in gown of buff linen, that set off rarely her bright hair, accompanied her, for Hannah had said, "Thee may go with me to the warehouse, if thee pleases, Reba. The *Martha Brooks* hath come to anchorage, and I know thee loves the sight of a vessel newly returned from foreign parts."

But neither Reba nor Hannah guessed, as they went side by side, choosing the shadiest portions of the flagged sidewalk, for the heat was still severe, how unexpectedly their expedition was to terminate.

Since the departure of General Washington and his army for the Head of Elk, the city had relapsed into its former quiet. Nothing of definite importance had transpired within its bounds, except the circulation among the inhabitants, by leading Quakers, of what the Council of Safety considered a most seditious paper.

This urged a peaceful policy, and strict loyalty to Great Britain. In addition, a protest had been sent by them, to the Continental Congress, against the continuance of the war.

The result of these activities was known to neither of the Stanhopes, as yet; but this morning they noticed on street corners, and before tavern doors, knots of men, discussing in undertones, and with an air of curious tension, something of moment, either about to take place, or already under way.

The minds of both leapt instinctively to the army, to Gilbert, to battle. Had battle begun, or was it even now disastrously ended?

"Aunt Hannah," queried Reba uneasily, "does thee suppose ill hath come to our soldiers?"

Scarcely had the words passed her lips, when her fears, in that quarter at least, were set at rest, only to become keenly aroused, however, on behalf of those nearer home, for suddenly a voice almost at her ear shouted, "Down with the Quakers! Down with the Broad-brims! Make 'em take the Test Oath! Make 'em take the Test Oath!"

The cry, cutting the air with venomous sharpness, startled her. It was the same that she had heard on that day when the mob had surged through High Street, riding three unfortunates upon the Tory Cart. This morning it was taken up instantly by a gathering crowd, and waxed louder and louder.

The mob was abroad again!

Reba could not distinguish above the roar of voices the fall of approaching feet, but her heart stood still with apprehension at what she saw.

A company of Quakers, some of them the best beloved, the most estimable of the Society of Friends, were being conducted by a detail of militia down High Street. It was evident that they were under arrest.

Making no resistance, they stepped steadily, and with unshakable dignity, straight forward. Clad alike in sober brown or drab short-skirted coats, and small clothes, their low-crowned broad-brimmed hats set decorously upon their heads, their faces remained serene and imperturbable, though the lips of some were set grimly.

In spite of the guarding soldiers, many a stone and clod of earth, flung by the populace, found unerring

mark upon the persons of these men, but the victims gave no sign that they felt the blows. Advocates of peace, non-combatants they were, but none could say with truth that they were cowards.

"Aunt Hannah," Reba's voice choked on the words, "here come Friends Henry Drinker, John Pemberton, Thomas Gilpin, and, oh,—good kind Friend James Pemberton! Where can the soldiers be taking them? What do they mean to do with them?"

To this Hannah Stanhope could find no reply. In a dismay equal to, though less openly expressed than Reba's, she watched them as they came.

They walked two abreast, to the number of forty. Besides those whom Reba had named, were Thomas Wharton, Senior, John and Abel James, Joshua Fisher and his sons, and many another familiar figure to those who looked on.

Near to the end came Henry Skinner. His face, not unlike his son's, but cast in a nobler, less self-seeking mold, was lit by honest, kindly eyes. He passed, and his form was swallowed up among the rest.

"I'll lay they've got to speak out plain now, and say once for all whether they'll take the Test Oath, or whether they won't," declared a voice in the throng.

Something familiar in the emphatic tones made Reba cast a side-glance at the speaker, and she recognized in him, by his rugged countenance, and downright chin and jaw, a stone mason who had done work occasionally on the Stanhope properties.

He had addressed himself to a man on his right, a stranger to her, who, in his reply, showed himself more conversant with the trend of city affairs than the mason.

"They're being taken to the Coffee House, to answer for themselves to the Council of Safety. They cut their

own throats, in a manner of speaking, when they sent their protest against the war to Congress lately, and circulated a paper, signed by twenty or more of them, among the people, trying to influence as many as possible to remain loyal to the Crown. 'Twas enough to stir the Council to call for a list of the chief movers among the disaffected, and David Rittenhouse got for them the names of the forty who are passing by."

"What's like to happen to 'em, when they get 'em before Council?" inquired the mason, greedy for information.

"The first thing will be to see whether they'll take the Test Oath. It's not likely that they will, for their creed forbids oaths. Only Free Quakers have gone the length of swearing to it. If they refuse, the next step 'll be to demand a promise to be strictly neutral, and to give no aid or comfort to the enemy."

"Maybe they'll not give that, neither," ruminated the mason, stroking his bearded chin with plaster-roughened fingers.

"Very likely not," agreed the other, "but in that case,—" He paused for the fraction of a minute, and Reba, keenly alert for what might follow, leaned nearer to him, "it means prison," pronounced he with decision. "The risk of having these men at large is too great. We can't run it."

Reba shrank back. Prison for these good men! The thought dismayed her. If only they would give their word!

Hannah Stanhope had heard enough. A slight movement in the crowd, a narrow opening between the people, afforded opportunity to escape. She touched her niece upon the sleeve. " 'Twill be of no avail to visit the warehouse today, Reba, as thee sees. We will go home."

"Did thee notice that Richard Skinner was not among the forty?" asked Reba, after they had walked for some time in painful silence.

"Did thee think he might be?" was the dry response. "Nay, child. He knows better how to trim his sails."

She read the young man well, yet did not guess how skilful a mariner he was. He had not scrupled to promise whatever of neutrality the patriots required. Time enough to change front publicly when occasion was ripe. That would not be until the authority of the Crown was once more firmly established throughout the land. Meanwhile, both British and American protection papers, made out to him, lay safely locked away, to use, the one or the other, as best served circumstance, and the interests of Richard Skinner.

Sitting at his high desk in the warehouse, he received the information of his father's arrest with an air of mournful resignation, when it was brought to him by Elkanah Jones.

"Sufferings are the lot of the non-resisting Friend, Elkanah, as thee knows," he said, drooping his lids piously over his round eyes. "I will go immediately, and do what is possible to obtain my father's release, but if it prove that peaceful words are of no avail, then must we bow our heads under the rod, and practice patience."

Imbued with the principles of his faith, remembering the fortitude and meekness of George Fox, founder of Quakerism, under his sufferings, Elkanah was not amazed by the calm resignation with which Richard accepted the ill-tidings, and only admired him the more for his excellent self-command.

"Thee will proceed with the unloading of the *Martha Brooks,* and have her prepared to take in fresh cargo," went on Richard, "The merchandise and produce which

she will carry on her next voyage will require every foot of the hold. She leaves port again as quickly as she can be got ready."

These orders given, he closed and locked his desk, adjusted his broad-brim more securely upon his head, and left the warehouse, to bring to bear what influence he could in his father's behalf.

But the Council of Safety shook their heads impartially at every appeal, from no matter what source, for mitigation of sentence. These men had been too resolute in their stand to make it safe, so thought the Council, to exercise clemency toward them. Twenty-seven, among them Henry Skinner, had refused the oath, and were locked up in the Masonic Lodge, awaiting exile to Virginia. Virginia had given many Tories to Philadelphia, and for that reason, her prisons were chosen to receive these Philadelphia Tories during their period of exile. The remainder had given a promise to render no aid or comfort to the enemy, and had been released on parole, and warned not to go far from their homes.

Night had come, when Richard Skinner was admitted, by special permit, to the assembly room of the Masonic Lodge. The rays of a solitary lantern, puncturing the gloom, made dimly visible the figures of Henry Skinner and his companions.

Bolt upright, every one, they sat, wrapped in silence and profound meditation, as though it were a First Day meeting, with each one of them holding himself ready for the spirit to move him to speech.

At the entrance of his son, Henry Skinner raised his eyes, and from under the shadow of his hat brim regarded him with mild reproach.

"Thee has been slow to seek me, Richard," he said.

"I had looked for thee sooner. Surely access to me, for speech at least, would not have been denied thee."

"Nor was it," admitted Richard, readily enough, "but I was loth to come without good news for thee. All day I have spent, going from one to another in authority, trying to bring about thy release. Moreover, there were many pressing duties at the warehouse, that if neglected, would have involved our clients in heavy losses. I knew thee would not have me fail in my attention to them in thy absence."

Henry Skinner's expression changed, under the influence of his son's words, to one of unqualified approval. "Thee was right, Richard, in fulfilling thy duty there," he said.

"Much time was spent with Timothy Matlack, in an effort to persuade the Council to release thee on parole."

"Thee knows, or should know, that I will neither take any manner of oath, nor in any wise countenance rebellion against the lawful authority of England."

"I wish, however, thee could see thy way to making some small concessions in this emergency," urged Richard, undeterred by the firmness of his father's tone. And then, more boldly, as no reply came, he went on, "Does thee not think there may be better ways to serve the British Crown than languishing in a Virginia prison?"

"I do not trim my sails to suit the wind, my son. For me there is but the straight course of strict adherence to the Testimony and Discipline of Friends."

"Nor would I ask thee to forsake it, father. Yet if thee could but give thy parole, thy freedom would be instantly restored to thee. Can thee not see the wisdom of that?"

"Nay."

Richard sighed. "Then must I bear, as best I can, to see thee exiled. Haply thee may not be long away. I have not found it at variance with my own conscience, thus far, to maintain friendship with both sides; and that is fortunate, for should neither of us be in Philadelphia at this crisis, to look to our business, much havoc might befall the interests in our keeping from these rabid lovers of independence."

"I know that thee will guard their interests as thee would thine own," commended Henry Skinner affectionately. "But see to it," he continued in warning, "that thee does not sacrifice any right principle, to compass it. The things of this world are as naught, when weighed against those of heaven."

Willing that his father should put the best construction upon his motives, Richard accepted his praise with an air of becoming modesty, and readily promised to give heed to his closing words.

Then the head of the firm of Henry Skinner and Son began to instruct his junior partner as to the conduct of affairs in his absence.

"I give thee full charge, and full authority, Richard. Render all accounts promptly, and in gold, as hath been agreed. In matters that belong to his province, thee will receive good help from Elkanah Jones. I have ever found him efficient and trustworthy. Give him thy confidence."

The two talked far into the night, for Henry Skinner had heretofore kept strictly under his own supervision many matters of especial importance. Among them had been the affairs of the Stanhopes. On every point concerning these, he carefully informed his son.

They spoke in low tones throughout, and none of the silent men in the room overheard a syllable. Nor did

they wish to do so. Each sat sunk in that same deep meditation, remote apparently from whatever pertained to this world and its vanities, in which they had been engaged at Richard's advent.

Grave-faced and pale in the obscurity, they neither stirred, nor gave outward sign that they were aware of his presence while he conversed with his father, nor were conscious of his rising to take leave of their comrade in misfortune.

"I will see thee again, in the morning," promised Richard in parting.

"If thee can," returned his father, but the lingering clasp of his hand told that he doubted the probability of it, since orders for the departure of the men might come at any hour, at the discretion of the Council of Safety.

Richard returned the clasp. He loved his father as deeply as his cold and selfish nature permitted, and he would have given much to save him from his impending fate, but to do it, he must have his co-operation, and that co-operation Henry Skinner's convictions forbade.

His anxieties for his father were greatly tempered by the belief that it was a mere matter of weeks, or at worst, months, before the Crown would triumph, and then release from exile would follow.

In the meantime, he did not overlook the welcome fact, even in the midst of his father's distresses, that for a time, at least, and that a crucial one, the fortunes of the Stanhopes would be under his own unhampered control. Ample details concerning their interests had just been furnished him. He would verify them by the books and papers in the warehouse before he slept.

The *Martha Brooks,* completely unloaded, lay high at her anchorage, her spars silvered by the full moon, her

docks and hold untenanted, waiting in the hush of night for the bustle and turmoil that were to overtake her at early morning.

Turning the key in the lock of the warehouse door, the newly constituted master smiled as he reflected that this staunch vessel, owned in large part by the Stanhopes, would have as cargo, on her outgoing voyage, whatever he considered of greatest advantage to himself, and that he had unquestioned power to determine whither she should be bound.

Chapter VIII

"Thee greatly exceeds thy authority, Friend Richard," protested Hannah Stanhope.

Richard Skinner had just declared that for the present, at least, no hard money would be paid out to any doing business with Henry Skinner and Son.

"Not so," returned Richard, unmoved by her displeasure. He shifted himself in his chair to face her more directly, where she sat by his desk, and his drab eyes showed not a sign of yielding to her several times repeated request for what was now due. "My father hath left these matters in my hands in his absence, to manage as seems me best. Hard money, as thee knows, is not easy to come by in these days of paper bills, flooded upon us by the Continental Congress. The welfare of the business demands that I keep by me such hard monies as come in from foreign parts, for if the British gain the ascendancy here, our Continental money might have the value of waste paper. The merchant who has no hard money will be in sore straits then. It will serve our clients better in the end, moreover, to leave the proceeds of their ventures with us to draw upon in a later and greater emergency."

"It is not for thee to dictate what I shall do with my own and Reba's. The monies are due us. Thy father hath always paid us in gold, according to the terms of his agreement with us. He hath been faithful to them. I expect no less of thee."

"I grieve to disappoint thee," smiled Richard. "Thee takes an extreme view of the situation. If, however, thee is willing to receive the sum due thee in Continental bills, I will pay thee at once, as thee demands."

But Hannah was not so minded. "Thee has been paid hard money for our goods," she insisted, "and I will accept gold, and naught else."

"I marvel," Richard retorted blandly, "that an avowed sympathiser with the Continental cause should refuse Continental money. 'Tis scarcely consistent with thy views, and would not recommend thee to the Council of Safety, who, I may remind thee, have commanded that it be accepted when presented in payment, and if not, that punishment shall follow."

"This is no matter of ordinary buying and selling, but one of old-time agreement," returned Hannah stiffly. "I have no fear that the Council would not uphold me in such case. Thee has the right to the usual days of grace, in which to settle the account in the accustomed manner. But do not ask for more."

With this she was about to take her departure, but Richard stayed her.

"If thee could see thy way, Friend Stanhope, to granting a request of mine, I am willing to concede thee the hard money at once, and will do likewise in the future, as accounts fall due."

"A request?" repeated Hannah. Her tones held out no promise, convinced as she was that it would be one that furthered his interests, and not that of another, but she was altogether unprepared for the tenor of it, revealed in his next words.

"It is this. In another year or two, thy niece, Reba, will be of an age to marry. Perhaps thee has not yet thought of that, though it hath occurred to me."

Hannah looked at him blankly, not yet suspecting what was to come.

"Thee would seek far to find a more prudent and solid husband for her than myself, nor one more likely to preserve her fortune and herself from follies and vanities. It is true that she hath been disowned, but under proper guidance, she can be brought back to ways of grace. Thy influence with Reba is strong. If thee will consent to use it, to turn her thoughts by little and little to me, thee shall have thy hard money on the instant."

He smiled upon her serenely, waiting for her reply, believing that willing, or unwilling, she might be led to yield him the desired promise; if not now, then later; compelled to it by iron circumstance, which he might have power to sway.

Hannah Stanhope had listened to him with an indignant astonishment that grew in force as he proceeded. Now that he had paused, her reply came quickly, and with coldly withering calmness:

"Thee thinks amiss, Richard, if thee conceives that Reba would ever learn to look upon thee in that light, nor would I teach her so to do. Her fortunes," she laid stress upon this last word that was not lost on Skinner, "and herself go with her heart, when that awakens. For these a worthy object may not be so far to seek as thee conjectures. I marvel, also, that thee could think to bribe me to thy self-seeking purposes."

She gathered her white lace summer shawl about her, and rose.

Skinner rose with her. "When thee is ready to receive the proceeds of thy shipping interests in Continental bills, they are ready for thee. Thee cannot say that I have refused to pay thee Stanhope earnings. Meanwhile, think of what I have offered thee."

In contemptuous silence, Hannah Stanhope left him, knowing as well as he, that had he refused to pay her in any form, that he ran risk of disownment by Friends' Meeting for his delinquency. In this crisis of the Colonies' affairs there might be none who would uphold her in her just contention, however great her own and Reba's financial loss might be should she accept Continental money. It was a hard matter, which at present she could not adjust. As to Richard's proposition, Reba should never hear of it from her, either now, or at any future time.

Troubled in mind and heart, she threaded her way among the bales and boxes that lined the warehouse, and were piled upon the wharf outside, where stevedores were hard at work at the reloading of the *Martha Brooks*.

She was glad that Reba was away from home, that she might have opportunity to regain her outward serenity unobserved by the watchful eyes of love.

Early in the afternoon her niece had gone with Harvey to the big stone house near to Gray's Ferry. John Bartram, who lay ill, and perhaps dying, had asked for her, wishing to look once more into the face of his favorite.

It was not the gay-hearted maid of late June, and glinting summer sunshine that had gone through the familiar windings of Gray's Lane, on this eleventh day of September. She was silent, and grave of mien, going to meet fresh sorrow, with sorrow already in her heart.

Kneeling by the bedside of a man greater than she knew, though not nobler and gentler of soul than her innocent and loving nature had guessed, she tried to soothe away his haunting fear.

"Grieve not," she was saying, while she stroked with

lingering tenderness the worn hand that had relaxed itself weakly upon the coverlet, "Thy garden shall not suffer, if by any power it can be prevented. Surely, even savages would not harm a place beautiful and heavenly lovely as it is."

John Bartram's eyes were darkened by doubt. "What do men of war care for delicate things like flowers, or for green and waving trees that block the way of cannon, and engines of destruction?" he muttered feebly. "For them they are but obstacles, to be swept from the path; obstacles that obscure the movements of the enemy. I have no hope, I have no hope."

"Nay, but thee has trust in God," whispered Reba. "War may come, and cannon pass this way, but God will watch over thy garden. In my heart I feel it."

"Would that I could feel it too," he mourned. "If I could be certain that the work of my life had not been done in vain, if I could know that my garden would be here to teach and bless, long after I am gone, I could die in peace. But I am troubled for it. Weighed down, without power to rise."

Reba bethought her of the inscription carved in stone above his study window. "Listen," she said softly, close to his pillow, and repeated the words.

"Thee believes that God is almighty, else thee had not graven such words upon the very forefront of thy house," she reminded him. "Trust in His power, then, and rest content. War will pass by thy garden." It was more a hope than a prophecy, but she uttered it as though it were a truth not to be gainsaid.

Daylight faded, twilight fell, night wore on. Reba was to take the night watch to relieve Friend Ann.

Mindful that this opportunity might be the last that would be hers to minister to her beloved friend, Reba

turned the sick man's pillow, held nourishment to his lips, drew back the curtains from the windows, that the breeze blowing from over the Schuylkill, and across fields, might bring refreshing coolness.

Always she strove to banish from his mind the ever-recurring dread that beset him.

At break of day John Bartram slept at last.

Reba stood long, looking down upon the benevolent face, freed for the time being from the lines graven by harassing fears. Thus she wished to remember him when he was gone from mortal sight. Thus she wished to think of him in the land whither he was bound.

Tears came, and lest he should open his eyes, and see them, she stole to the window, and leaned upon the broad sill. Frost had descended upon the landscape in the night. Reba felt the breath of it, saw in a haze, through her tears, the touch of it in reddened foliage of maple and sweet gum. Its thin white mantle overspread the grass.

Beyond the garden lay the open fields of John Bartram's farm. It was while ploughing these fields, a half century before, that he, a Quaker farmer, with naught beyond a farmer's horizons and aspirations, had bent above a common daisy, uprooted by the plough. He stooped, and picked it up, to consider it more closely, before casting it away. By the beauty of its structure, he was stayed to longer contemplation. Other flowers, other plants must be as wonderfully adapted to their use, and environment, and their season, as this one. Desire sprang up in him to know more. He began his self-training in the science of plant life. From that humble beginning, triumphing over all difficulties and discouragements, and carrying on his work as a farmer meanwhile, he had become one of the most renowned botanists in the world.

Winding away to the southwest, like a ribbon, along the edge of the fields, was the road to Philadelphia from Darby and Chester, visible at intervals through trees. Reba's eyes traveled to it unconsciously, and but half seeing.

At such an early hour it should have been empty; but this morning there was movement upon it, a flashing wave-like movement, rapid, steady, continuous, rhythmic. It caught the girl's wandering eyes, and enchained them.

What was that moving glittering line?

She brushed the tears from her lids that she might see more clearly, and forgetting, for the moment, the sleeper upon his bed, leaned far out across the sill.

Keener, more alert vision gave her the answer to her question. Indistinguishable at that distance, except as human forms, close ranked, and going straight forward, was a moving army of hundreds, nay thousands of soldiers, and the glitter was on steel of countless gun-barrels, uplifted on the shoulders of marching men.

They were on their way to Philadelphia. For all she knew the van might already be entering the city.

Were they British? She quickly set that aside, for no gleam of scarlet showed among them. None but the brown and buff, or blue and buff of the Continentals, or the hunting-shirts of the un-uniformed battalions, would mingle with the tones of earth and tree-trunk, browned grass and overhanging foliage, as did these.

Did they come in triumph, or in defeat? She asked herself the question anxiously, and asked in vain.

They swept on, without sound of martial music, which had it been present, would, in the silence of morning, been borne to her across the fields. Only that ceaseless wave-like glitter, and steady undulating of human forms, betrayed that an army was passing over the frost-wet road.

Here was the moving spirit of war, that would not stay itself, in stress of battle's need, for any needs of peace, whether they were needs of friends, or needs of foes. In battle's cause, just or unjust, its engines would have way. The thought of this fell upon the girl's heart with crushing force. What chance was there that any, least of all herself, a mere maid, could do aught to save this priceless garden?

But the sight of the marching men had aroused other emotions in her, that came nigh to drowning her first anxiety.

If these were Continental soldiers—and she felt sure of it—was Gilbert among them? Was this, that she beheld, a mere withdrawal from joining battle with superior forces, as must sometimes be, or was it swift retreat after bloody conflict? If the latter, what had been Gilbert's fate? The hideous thought that he might be lying dead upon some distant battlefield overwhelmed her.

Her fingers closed stiffly upon the outer edge of the sill, and she dropped her eyelids for an instant, to shut out that glittering wave of steel, for she could look upon it no longer.

Faint and sick with apprehension, she crept away from the window, and seated herself by the sick man's bed, to keep watch while he slept on in merciful oblivion.

When the time came that she must leave him, he had not yet awakened. Hoping, believing, that she would see him once again, she stooped, and kissed the edge of the pillow on which his head, crowned with snow-white hair, rested, before she stole out of the room at Friend Ann's beckoning finger.

Chapter IX

The twenty-four hours that followed were as a fevered dream to Reba.

She reached home to find Philadelphia's streets thronged with exhausted, famished soldiers; to see Gilbert, gaunt, haggard, powder-grimed, and ragged, but unhurt; to hear his story, briefly, yet vividly told, of the disastrous defeat of the Americans at the Battle of the Brandywine.

For his father, Hannah Stanhope, and herself, as they sat together in the Westwood parlor, he pictured the manner in which Washington and his men had harried and delayed the British on their advance from the Head of Elk. He told of the emptying of granaries, burning of bridges, removing of horses and carts, and cattle from the route of march. He related of skirmishings; bold reconnoitres by Washington, attended only by Lafayette, to the very outposts of the enemy; and lastly, of the stand of the army to contest the passage by the British of the fords of the Brandywine, and their subsequent retreat.

While he narrated these things, she and her aunt, by unremitting labor with their needles, fitted him forth again with decent raiment.

Then they bade him good-bye for the second time.

Twenty-four hours only, had formed the brief respite that Washington had found imperative for his weary soldiers, before they went forth again to meet the enemy

upon the Lancaster Road, and hold them back as long as possible from Philadelphia.

Defeated though they had been, they were not discouraged. They had had no reason to expect victory, eleven thousand, poorly equipped, poorly trained, ill fed, ill clothed men as they were, many of whom had never before been under fire, as opposed to Howe's eighteen thousand splendidly equipped, thoroughly trained and experienced regulars. But Congress had urged a battle, and Washington had felt that, heavy as the odds were, Philadelphia should not be in jeopardy without a blow struck in her defence.

The British had been compelled to pay a round price for victory, and Washington and his generals had turned what Cornwallis had intended to be a complete wiping out of the American army into a masterly retreat.

Two weeks had passed since then, and they now lay encamped at Warwick Furnace. Torrential rains had buried the roads in mud, preventing either army from offering battle. Ammunition and muskets ruined by the downpour, without supplies or reinforcements, which had been urgently besought, earnestly hoped for, but not forthcoming, General Washington knew that it would be madness to risk another battle at that time.

He had delayed, for nearly five weeks, Howe's passage over the distance of about fifty miles from the Head of Elk to Philadelphia, but it was plain that the British could no longer be prevented from occupying that city.

The morning of September twenty-sixth dawned chill, with comfort to be found in woolen blankets tucked snugly about the sleeper. Reba, half awake, drew hers to the tips of her rosy ears, where she lay curled in the plump featherbed, that billowed round her.

The hour for rising had not yet come. That would be heralded by Phoebe, bearing a shovel, laden with live coals, and an armful of birch logs, which would promptly kindle with snap and crackle, flooding the fireplace with yellow blaze, and sending streams of welcome heat out across the hearth into the spacious room.

Under the pleasant influence of the fire, the polished maple of the furniture would take on a richer tone; the immaculate dimity of the hangings of the wide high-poster bed and the muslin curtains at the windows would show a yet purer white, making the green of the trees outside the twinkling panes seem greener, more translucent, in the early morning sunshine than before.

Sleepily, Reba was conscious of this, and though she would not be averse to slipping from her cosy nest beneath the blankets, when the moment came to take up the duties of the day, she was willing to remain for the present in drowsy content.

The street cries began to come in at her window: the sandman bawling, "Sand your kitchens, sand your floors. Want any sand, want sandy?"; the chimney-sweep boys with their, "Sweep-oh," or "Wa Ki-yi, Ki-yi, Ki-yi"; the softsoap man's call; the catfish woman; the milkman's whistle; these, while they brought her wider and wider awake, served to assure her that the city's life still flowed on; that the British were not yet arrived.

This month of September had brought grief as well as anxiety to Reba, for two days after the defeat at the Brandywine, good John Bartram had died, troubled to the last for his garden.

In the time that had intervened, a grand exodus of nearly eight thousand of Philadelphia's inhabitants went on. Unwilling to endure the prospective distresses and inconveniences of enemy occupation, or to be involved,

perhaps, in associations which, however the tide turned, or whichever side finally triumphed, might be brought up to their discredit, they streamed across Upper, Middle, and Gray's Ferry, in every sort of vehicle, from dawn to dark.

While these went, and Tories awaited with open exultation the entrance of the British, the Stanhopes, in common with other patriots who remained, braced themselves to meet what might befall, and went quietly about their usual duties.

Sir William Howe had sent word to Philadelphia that all who remained peaceably in their houses would not be molested.

It comforted Reba in these days, not a little, that Friend Mary Norris had announced from the first that she would not quit her Chestnut Street mansion. That meant that, whatever might come, she would still have Debby's companionship, which dear to her always, counted for the more, now that Gilbert was away.

From reflections on these things, Reba's thoughts drifted to more immediate concerns.

At her knitting, the evening before, she had observed that the stock of woolen yarn was low. This morning she must go to the wool dealer's shop in the Market House, to replenish it.

"I do not like to have thee go alone, child," objected her aunt, as Reba, breakfast being over, was preparing to start upon her errand. "Phoebe had best accompany thee, with a larger basket than the one thee carries, and bring home as many hanks as possible, for if the British come in, we may find it difficult to supply ourselves at all; therefore we must not lack foresight."

The wool dealer's shop was full of customers, when Reba and her handmaid crossed its sill. There were

others in Philadelphia, prudent housewives, like Hannah Stanhope, eager to purchase while they could.

Christ Church bells were striking the hour of ten, before Reba's turn came. She had just made her wants known, and the shopman was in the act of pulling down the heavy hanks of grey yarn for her, when a blare of martial music was heard from Second Street.

The tune was "God Save the King!"

Reba's cheek blanched, for she knew what that meant. The British were coming in over the Germantown Road.

The shopman dropped the yarn, and sprang to his shutters. He would take no risks from marauders. Barred door, and covered panes must keep out pilfering hands.

"Give me these quickly, and let me go," begged Reba, sweeping a great pile of hanks together, for she had no mind to tarry till the streets were filled with soldiery.

Every customer except herself had already deserted the shop to take refuge at home, and Phoebe, snivelling with fright, was looking frantically about for a place where she might secrete herself, in case her young mistress lingered till exit was cut off.

"No time for that till my shop's safe," sputtered the wool dealer, in a sweat of anxiety, slipping his iron shutterbar into place.

The strains were drawing nearer.

Reba took out her purse. "I will pay thee well, if thee waits upon me at once, so that I may go," she pleaded.

But the man was obdurate. "Not till my shop's safe," he reiterated hoarsely. "They'll rob me, the rascally Hessians! They'll rob me! They're the very devils for plunder!"

He had abundant reason for distrust of them. Wherever the Hessian mercenaries went, whom His Britannic

Majesty had employed to aid his regulars in crushing his rebellious subjects, farms, houses, shops, were swept bare of everything of value that they could lay hands upon.

Seeing that there was nothing to be gained by insistence, yet determined not to go without the much needed wool, Reba stood by the counter, governing her impatience as best she could, until the shop was wrapped in darkness, and every bar in its place.

"Be quiet," she admonished the weeping Phoebe. "Has thee no courage? Bear thyself bravely. None will do thee hurt, hid as thee is, behind thick wood, and iron bars."

But Phoebe threw her apron over her head, as though that could still further protect her, and dissolved in a heavier rain of tears.

Reba sternly turned her back upon her, and as soon as the wool dealer had groped his way to a candle and lighted it, and began to bundle together the yarn she had chosen, she laid her bills upon the counter in payment, and spoke again to her timorous companion.

"Thy basket, Phoebe. The yarn is ready. Wipe thy eyes, and come."

"Not yet! Oh, please not yet, Miss Reba! Let the soldiers be all gone by first! I'm feared of 'em! Terrible feared!"

"Thee is afraid of everything, Phoebe, that has in it the smallest particle of danger. 'Tis wartime, now, and thee must put aside thy fears." Carefully counting the change that the dealer had given her, she placed it in her purse, picked up her own basket, and started for the door.

The wool dealer, nothing loth to clear his shop of them, went to the door, but withheld his hand from the bar until they should be on the spot, and ready to pass out instantly.

Phoebe made one last despairing protest. "Wait, wait, Miss Reba! Please!"

"Come," was Reba's sole reply.

Phoebe gulped upon a rising sob, took up her burden, and reluctantly obeyed.

The bar was lifted cautiously, the door opened barely enough to give them egress, and they stood on the flagged pavement without. The clang of the bar as it fell to its place on the inner side of the door, gave the hapless Phoebe to know that she might hope for no further shelter within the shop.

They had emerged at the exact moment that Lord Cornwallis was riding by.

Reba had clear view of his short thickset figure, his well formed features, his greying hair. A gentleman he looked to be, certainly, with a not unkindly face.

"If he were not an enemy, he might not be so bad," thought she, "but as it is—" Casting one disdainful glance at him, her eyes passed on to the company of British Grenadiers, immediately behind him, impeccably arrayed in red coats trimmed with blue, pointed red caps glittering with silver, and speckless white leggings.

After them marched the Hessian mercenaries, their faces morose and hard under high bucket-shaped leather or brazen caps, their mustachios bristling fiercely. As they stepped forward, their band seemed to boom out, "Plunder! Plunder! Plunder!" to the ears of the terrified Phoebe, cowering in the doorway, behind her young mistress' back.

At the moment it was impossible for the two, with their laden baskets, to proceed, the pavements being obstructed by cheering Tories, by resentful patriots, by delighted boys, who thought only of the brightness of the uniforms, the loud music issuing from the brazen

throats of the instruments, and the glossy horses that stepped proudly over the cobble-stones.

As usual, Quaker blinds and shutters were closed, that those within might take no cognizance of such matters, while Artillery, Yagers, 16th Dragoons, and Joseph Galloway, Enoch Story, the Allens, and other recently banished Tories, streamed down Second Street, and on to Chestnut Street, after Cornwallis.

"That we should be forced to let them!" Reba told herself indignantly, watching them pass. "'Twill be the quartering of them next. At least, General Howe has given a promise that those who bide quiet shall not be disturbed. We shall soon discover how well he keeps it."

A quarter of an hour later she reached home, to be received by her aunt with intense relief, for though the enemy had come in without bluster, Hannah could not but be uneasy until her charge was safe at home again.

"Where does thee think they will be quartered, aunt?" inquired Reba, helping to lift out the hanks of wool from the baskets. Her mind still dwelt upon that unwelcome possibility that had engaged it while she had watched the passage of the soldiers through Second Street. "To have British soldiers in the house, enemies at one's own table! It would be insufferable!"

"We may have far worse to endure than their mere presence, my dear child," replied Hannah Stanhope, looking gravely at her, over silver-bowed spectacles. "If they should come into our house, I advise thee to guard thy tongue, avoid rash behavior, and keep out of their way as much as possible. I have often heard thee say that thee would suffer for the cause, have I not?"

"I would take my stand openly, and let no one be in doubt of it," Reba's head was lifted, and her cheeks were flushed.

"It is far from me to ask thee to be untruthful, Reba," was the calm rejoinder. "I would have thee brave, and even bold, wherever our good cause can be served thereby. And thee will have occasion enough to content thee, as I have said before. But the truth need not be shouted forth, in season, and out of season. Speak it in its proper time and place, and bear in mind that the mere flaunting of thy opinions in the face of the foe, when thee is in their power, can only result in injury to thyself without gain to the cause."

" 'Twill be hard to keep silent under provocation," answered the girl.

"Hold before thee the ancient adage, 'Speech is silver, silence is golden,' " advised her aunt. "It will help thee over many a hard place."

Reba had reason to prove the wisdom of Hannah's words, before the afternoon had passed.

They were seated at their one o'clock dinner. Dorcas was preparing to place the dessert upon the table, when a violent wrenching of the front doorknob startled them all. Sickly grey crept over the chocolate hue of Dorcas' plump cheeks. Phoebe, with memories of ferocious Hessians fresh in her mind, had cautiously turned the key in the lock on her return from the morning expedition. Now she would have sped to drop the iron bar, and secure the door still further, had not her mistress stopped her.

"Resistance is folly," she told her. " 'Twill but provoke worse rudeness. Nor should we show fright. That is beyond thee, Phoebe. Thee had best go to the kitchen, and remain there. Go, also, Dorcas. I will attend the door myself."

Glad enough to avail themselves of the permission, the domestics retreated trembling to their own domain.

The first unavailing attempt to gain entrance to the

house, had given place to a violent pounding of musket butts upon wood, that was like to split the panels.

Hannah Stanhope was proceeding alone toward the door, but Reba sprang after her. "Thee shall not go without me, aunt," she declared.

Hannah stood still, and bent upon her a penetrating gaze. "We have ruffians to deal with," she warned her. "Can I trust thee to remember my advice? A rash word may ruin us."

"I will do my best," promised Reba. "I will not speak at all, but I must, I must go with thee."

"Then come."

The thunderous pounding continued without intermission, and Hannah, to prevent the door panels from being incontinently beaten in, hastened her steps.

Her sudden opening of the door gave the two British soldiers upon the broad door-stone some trouble to recover their muskets in time to prevent their beating empty air.

Hannah Stanhope looked beyond them to two officers, arrogant of bearing, and gorgeously uniformed in scarlet and gold.

"Friends," spoke Hannah, with unruffled demeanor, and seeming not to see the baggage heaped upon the pavement around them, "There is a knocker upon our door, which would have spared your muskets, and our panels. Your impatience betrays some urgency. What is it that you wish?"

The elder of the officers laughed superciliously, and stepped across the door-sill, his companion following. Both wore the air of proprietors upon their own ground. The privates, muskets still in hand, stood respectfully to right and left to give their superiors passage.

"These are our quarters, mistress," was the elder

officer's insolent reply. "We'll look them over, and have them rearranged to suit our convenience, and our pleasure. Attend us, while we give our orders."

Hot blood surged to Reba's very hair. That anyone, least of all an enemy, should adopt such a manner to her aunt, incensed her.

She remembered Hannah's warning barely in time to bite back the indignant words that flooded to her lips.

Hannah's voice came in courteous rebuke. "Friend, I trust thee will not forget, during thy stay here, that thee is addressing gentle-folk, and is a guest in a house which is not thine."

The younger officer flushed under his tan, and abated somewhat the rudeness of his attitude, but the other making no reply to Hannah, swept Reba from head to foot with an impudently appraising glance.

"Not too bad looking, the little Quaker wench, eh, Brownell," he laughed, and pushed by her and her aunt into the hall, and on toward the dining-parlor.

Lieutenant Brownell, and the common soldiers laden with baggage, came after.

Chapter X

"Let me go, aunt," coaxed Reba, in the late afternoon. Her arm was round Hannah Stanhope's waist, and her beseeching face close to hers.

"Nay, that I must not. Thee heard how rudely Captain Barker spoke of thee. If that could be in thine own house, how much the worse might happen to thee upon the open street. With all that I have to do, I cannot go with thee, and either Dorcas or Phoebe would be useless for thy protection."

"And yet thee knows, now that the city is full of soldiers, indoors and without, that I cannot remain housed till they are gone," persisted the girl. "Innumerable errands will require my going forth, and none nearer to thy heart and mine than this one, to save Friend Bartram's garden. He had good cause to be anxious. Let me go, Aunt Hannah, and beg some one in power to safeguard it."

In the time that had intervened since the two officers had come with their servants to take up quarters, the entire household had been driven to the utmost activity, in making arbitrarily demanded changes. Captain Barker would occupy the drawing-room, as being most convenient to the street-door. The bed in Hannah Stanhope's bedroom was wide, and comfortably fitted with mattress, feather-bed, and coverings, of superior quality. It must be brought down, and installed for him in the room of his choice. The furniture that interfered with

his habits must be summarily removed. Whatever he fancied elsewhere in the house must be fetched in.

His superior officer having announced what was to be done for him, Lieutenant Brownell made his selection. Reba's room satisfied him, except that it must be divested of its feminine trappings.

The library would serve as their sitting-room. The great mahogany desk would answer such uses as Captain Barker might require of it.

Their orderlies would be lodged in the attic.

The officers had eaten the remains of the dinner, had appropriated the entire dessert, and consumed it to the last crumb, and now sat, with feet upon the library table, filling every nook and corner of the room with the pungent smoke of strong tobacco. Their men had picked up what they could in the kitchen, had ordered and shoved Phoebe about until her wits had well-nigh deserted her, and had bullied Dorcas into a state of sullen submission.

"Where would thee go?" Hannah asked of Reba, after she had been coaxed for some time longer.

"To Friend Norris first. She will be apt to know who is able to grant what I ask, and, perchance, where he can be found."

Hannah Stanhope stood with bent head, her eyes upon the waxed floor, in troubled considering.

"Did thee not tell me, only a few hours ago, to be brave, even bold, in a good cause?" went on Reba, persuasively. "When our dear friend lay dying, I tried to comfort him, and told him that God would guard his garden. Yet thee knows, far better than I, that God must have human instruments to carry out His purposes. Do not refuse to let me try to be one of them today."

Hannah drew the winning face to hers and kissed it. "Go, Reba," she said, "but wear thy deep bonnet, and

pull it well down, child, for thy countenance is uncommonly fair."

There was a mist over Reba's eyes, for her aunt's words brought back to memory Friend Bartram's praise of her in June, and there was tender teasing in her voice, as she let Hannah tie the strings of the large dove-colored bonnet under her chin.

"Does thee not fear to encourage me in naughty vanity, sweet aunt? 'Tis the first time in my life that thee has told me that thee thinks me fair."

"I tell thee but to warn thee," defended Hannah, faintly smiling. "Be not long gone, and take no needless risks."

A demure Quakeress it was who stole forth of the front door. The grey bonnet, drawn down by Hannah's careful hand, shielded her face, the better because her head was bent. The large drab shawl, folded diagonally, concealed, in a measure, the extreme youthfulness of her figure, and its length, falling to the hem of her dress, disguised her still further.

Looking neither to right nor to left, she went directly to Fifth Street, and along it toward Chestnut. She was aware that the pavements were full of redcoats, though keeping her head sedulously dropped, she neither saw their faces, nor revealed her own.

Arrived at Chestnut Street, she found artillery parked in State House Yard, and the men of the Artillery Corps everywhere, from below the Norris mansion to above Sixth Street. She was glad of the protection that her bonnet afforded, for as she approached the Norris door, a young artilleryman, sauntering idly down the pavement, stopped, and was about to peer under the bonnet, but its depth discouraged him. She who had beauty and charm, he thought, would not be apt to conceal them

thus, and in the strength of this belief he passed indifferently on.

The street door to the mansion was wide open. Redcoats stood against the long garden wall on either side of the house. A group of officers lounged about the columned doorway. Baggage encumbered the sidewalk.

Attempting to slip past the officers, and enter unobserved, Reba tripped over a huge knapsack in her nervous haste, and trying desperately to recover her balance, suddenly felt a sustaining hand grasp her elbow, and dexterously lift her back to an upright position.

"Always gallant, André," laughed one of the officers, "always ready to help ladies in distress. Too bad your Quakeress isn't young and pretty, under the huge bonnet and shawl, so that you might write a poem to her eyebrow."

Captain André had had a view of Reba's blushing face, as he righted her, and she of his. Something in his look and act gave her confidence that he would not betray her, and the appeal in her soft hazel eyes that he would help her to maintain her incognito was not lost upon him.

He bowed his handsome head, and standing back from Reba with the bow and air of deep respect which he would have bestowed upon the most middle-aged of her sex, he responded amiably, "I trust I should not wait for that, Montressor."

Under cover of the badinage between them Reba vanished through the door. Debby was nowhere to be seen, nor were any of her small brothers, nor any of the servants. Reba guessed them to be in a secluded part of the house, away from contact with the invaders.

The spacious hall, like the sidewalk, was cluttered with baggage, thrown down promiscuously, and as she

passed unheeded up the staircase, the voice of Mary Norris, raised in expostulation, came to her from the drawing-room.

"It must be clear to thee, Lord Cornwallis, how impossible it will be for me to remain in my own house, with men in such numbers billeted here. Thy servants alone would drive me and my young family forth."

Reba's heart gave a quick throb. Lord Cornwallis himself was here!

Surely when she told him how rare a treasure was endangered, he could, if he would, command that the garden should be unmolested, unless he should be angered, perhaps, and in an adverse mood to concessions, by the widow's unwillingness to have her premises invaded.

She must not hesitate on that score, however, for in a moment the hall might be filled by the redcoats, now waiting upon the pavement, and Lord Cornwallis too engaged by pressing business for her to be able to gain his private ear.

Agitated by the consuming fear that he might not even listen to her, least of all be willing to grant her plea, she crossed the sill and entered the drawing-room.

Mary Norris, accomplished hostess, having for her familiar friends distinguished men and women on both sides of the water, stood in the centre of the room, one shapely hand resting upon a table covered with books and papers, the other lifted in unstudied matronly grace, to give emphasis to her words. Her rich lilac silk gown swept in elegant folds about her fine form. Her bright brown eyes, the brighter for the thin white cap that framed in her clear-cut features, were fixed upon the personage confronting her, with an expression of polite determination. Mistress in her own house she had

always been; mistress, if possible, she intended to remain.

Her air of sovereignty was not lost upon Lord Cornwallis. Although he was a soldier, he had long been accustomed to courts, and recognized a queen, wherever he might find her. His short, scarlet-clad figure was in the attitude of one bowing before supreme authority. "Madam," he was saying, "I cannot think of incommoding you. Quarters for myself and my men shall be found elsewhere, and my baggage shall be removed at once. Pray pardon my intrusion."

Gratified beyond her most sanguine expectations, Mary Norris was about to make a fitting acknowledgment of his courtesy, when she suddenly became aware that a third person had entered the room. She paused, and cast an inquiring glance at this soberly clad Quakeress, who had stepped in upon her privacy unannounced, and whose low-drawn bonnet, and enveloping shawl, gave no clue as to her identity.

Reba pulled off her headgear, and the beams of the late afternoon sun, striking through a western window, lit up her sweet face, pale with suppressed emotion, and made a halo round it of the ruddy gold of her hair.

Taking advantage of the momentary silence, she came nearer, speaking eagerly: "Friend Norris, may I interrupt thee? My business is of the most urgent."

Recovering from the surprise that she had received when Reba divested herself of her bonnet, Mary Norris replied instantly, and heartily. "That it must be, dear child, to bring thee here through streets filled with alien soldiery. But speak. What is it I can do for thee?"

Lord Cornwallis, his ear pleased by the musical tones of Reba's voice, turned to regard her. Not less susceptible to fresh young beauty than to matronly queenliness,

he looked upon the Quaker maid with undisguised interest and admiration.

Reba, seeing, took heart, but she made her plea to Mary Norris, as intercessor.

"I ask thy help, Friend Norris, not for myself, but for our dear Friend Bartram. Perhaps thee knows that his death was hastened by his fear lest his garden should be over-run and destroyed by soldiery."

"Yes," breathed Mary Norris, her kind eyes grave and sympathetic, "I know."

"Will thee not beseech Lord Cornwallis, then, if it be he who hath such power, to protect it from harm?"

Her liquid eyes, fervent and dark with earnestness, left the face of Mary Norris to dwell in entreaty upon that of Cornwallis, for it was he who must give answer. The genuine concern in Mary Norris' countenance had made her certain of that capable woman's willingness to do what she could, but it did not reassure her to detect a flicker of amusement upon that of the British general.

His answer came before the widow could speak.

"My dear young lady, I grant you that gardens have charm; that they may be infinitely precious to their owners; that they should be preserved, when it is possible. But war recognizes none of the soft needs of peace. Encampments must be made; quarters established; guards set; defences erected; and in doing this, a multitude of homes and gardens must disappear before the stern demands of war. You love this garden, for which you plead. What woman does not love a garden, she being herself a flower." He swept a bow that included both of those before him, and continued, "The man to whom the garden belonged was dear to you in his lifetime?"

"Most dear," murmured Reba tremulously.

"In spite of that," he went on inflexibly, "if our necessities involve its marring, or even its complete destruction, you must resign yourself to the inevitable. I can make no promises."

Feeling that he had definitely disposed of the question, he tried to soften a little the effect of his words by the kindly look that he directed to her. Though he smiled, amusement was gone, for he saw despair and pain in her lovely face.

Yet Reba could not give up: Mary Norris had not spoken; she turned to her as to a last refuge.

"Oh, tell him, Friend Norris," she besought in a breaking voice, for a sob was rising, "tell him that this is no common garden. Tell him that 'tis a world's treasure, once lost, never to be restored. Friend Bartram knew it. It darkened his last hour—the fear of its destruction. Tell him—tell him—what I cannot."

She ceased abruptly, for she could no longer hold back her rising grief.

Mary Norris took up the plea.

"My young friend speaks truly. She speaks of the renowned garden of the late John Bartram, the great Quaker botanist. The destruction of it would spell irreparable loss to botanical science throughout the world. Linnæus, Fothergill, Hans Sloane, were his intimates. Your own monarch would bitterly deplore its devastation, for John Bartram was court botanist to Great Britain through many long years. 'Tis a marvelous place, this garden, product of arduous toil, and scientific zeal of half a century. There is no person of consequence, from foreign parts, who doth not go out of his way to visit it, and wonder over it. Consider, therefore, whether it be not thy bounden duty, in spite of the necessities of war, to prevent its violation."

A woman of culture and discernment was adding her supplication to that of the Quaker maid, and Lord Cornwallis did not doubt the truth of what she said. Back to his memory also, came words which his friend, the Earl of Bute, had spoken in praise of a unique garden, and a Quaker botanist somewhere in the American Colonies. Here was the garden; John Bartram was the man.

Her gaze riveted anxiously upon the general's face, Reba saw a change pass over it. It was evident that what Friend Norris had said had set him to reconsidering.

Mary Norris knew when to speak, and when to hold her tongue. She added not another syllable to what she had already said.

Taking her cue from her elder, Reba, too, remained silent, but her heart beat thickly while she waited. Although the time was not long in reality, it seemed to her interminable before he broke the tension of her suspense.

He lifted his eyes, which had been bent upon the Turkey carpet, as he pondered, and addressed himself to her in his most gracious tones. "I owe a debt to you, and," with an inclination of his powdered head to Friend Norris, "to you, Madam, for making known to me the importance and value of this garden. I had heard of its fame, in England, but had forgotten its whereabouts. The house itself is to be used for the quartering of officers of rank. Although I have not power to give more than temporary protection, I can promise that orders shall be given at once, and rigidly enforced, for the safeguarding of the entire property. You may rest assured that Sir William Howe will confirm these orders, and make them permanent."

This said, he bowed himself from the room with such

She ceased abruptly, for she could no longer hold back her rising grief.

expedition, that neither Reba nor Mary Norris had time to reply to his comforting pledge.

In her reaction from distress and disappointment to complete relief, Reba clung for an instant to Friend Mary Norris. "Without thee, I should have failed," she murmured. "What doth not Friend Bartram owe to thee!"

She picked up her bonnet to resume it. Mary Norris adjusted it with affectionate fingers, and tied the strings with exactness. "My part in it was but a small matter, Reba. 'Twas thee who didst remember in time, and acted quickly."

Shawled and bonneted as rigorously as when she came, Reba found, when she had reached the foot of the staircase, that every vestige of baggage had been removed from the hall. The group of waiting officers had departed, and not a single redcoat leaned his back against the Norris wall. The orders of Lord Cornwallis for departure had been instantly given, and as instantly obeyed. To Reba, it augured well for his promise concerning John Bartram's garden.

A redcoated common soldier, orderly to Captain Barker, stood on guard at her own door, when she arrived there, and as she was about to ascend the marble steps, he set his musket like a bar across the entrance.

Reba shoved back her bonnet, that he might see and recognize her, believing that that would be sufficient to make him give her passage.

But the musket remained fixed. Without the civility of a word, the soldier cocked his thumb toward the alleyway, to indicate that she must go in by it, if she would go in at all.

Unable to credit such impudence, and thinking that he must have mistaken her for one of the domestics,

Reba spoke authoritatively, and her eyes rebuked him. "This is my own house. Remove thy musket, that I may enter."

"Hofficers' quarters now," was the orderly's imperturbable answer, "Capting Barker, and Leftenant Brownell 'as give orders positive that hall but 'is Majesty's soldiers uses the halleyway."

Reba regarded him for a moment irresolutely. She burned to be able to thrust aside the offending weapon by main force, and to whirl the orderly out of her path. But she was only a maid, with a maid's strength, and the enemy was in power. Much as it galled her to submit to such insult upon her own premises, she must submit. Nor could she stoop to bandy words with such a boor.

"The halleyway, girl," commanded the redcoat gruffly, "this 'ere front door's for Capting and 'is men."

Putting check upon her fierce indignation, Reba drew her foot from the doorstone, and gathering her scorn into the single withering glance that she flung at him, she passed into the narrow alley.

Chapter XI

That same evening, while dice were rattling in the Stanhope library, where a gay party of officers were seated at play, and Reba and her aunt had sought retirement in that portion of their home still left to them, Richard Skinner was closeted with Mr. Joseph Galloway, chief Tory adviser of General Howe, in the study of the handsome Galloway mansion at the corner of High Street and Delaware Sixth.

Galloway was observing, "His Majesty's troops occupy the city, it is true, but they are cut off from their supplies. General Washington has placed himself in a position to prevent them from obtaining any from Pennsylvania. Fort Mifflin, and the works on Mud Island and at Red Bank, defended by heavy artillery, prevent them from opening the channel of the Delaware River, which is sown with chevaux-de-frise-like frames that would destroy any ship coming in that strikes against them. The works at Billingsport, the floating batteries, galleys, armed vessels, and fire-ships, cut off communication with Admiral Howe's fleet, thus intercepting supplies by water. These render the co-operation of the fleet and the army impossible. Again, the American vessels, the large frigate *Delaware* for instance, a smaller frigate, galleys and small craft in the river above Fort Mifflin, prevent their crossing to the Jersey shore to obtain forage there."

"A serious situation," commented Richard Skinner,

serenely comfortable in a roomy, chintz-covered wing-chair.

"Most serious," frowned Galloway, his brows drawn almost together in an effort to think of some solution to this vexed question. The light of the wax candles, striking on his face, brought out his powerful features, that disclosed a proudly dominant nature, desirous to lead, and ambitious to rule.

"If it cannot be remedied, the British army may be compelled to evacuate Philadelphia almost as soon as occupied, and General Washington is as well aware of this as is General Howe."

"A remedy will be found," opined Skinner, folding the tips of his fingers over against one another.

"Lord Cornwallis is planning three batteries to act against any American ships that may appear before the town," went on Galloway. "Their construction begins tomorrow."

"If the frigate *Delaware* can be made to fall into the hands of the British," suggested Richard Skinner, "the worst part of thy problem is solved."

"Made to fall?" echoed Galloway, as though he had not rightly understood.

"Made to fall," repeated Skinner unhesitatingly. "I can accomplish it for thee."

Galloway sat sharply alert. If through his instrumentality, or by means of one of his agents, command of the ferry could be gained, it would send him still higher in favor with the Crown. "In what manner?" he demanded.

"In this," Richard Skinner informed him, leaning slightly forward in his chair, as if to give added force to his words, "the frigate *Delaware* is owned by the Continental Congress, but if the captain be given a proper

pilot, long experienced with the tides and shoals of the river, a pilot, thee understands, who has been thoroughly suborned to the interests of the Crown, the frigate may be made to fall into British hands, in spite of all the efforts of the captain to prevent it. That will open the ferry."

Galloway's eyes glittered. He concentrated his attention upon Skinner's every word.

"The captain, intent upon the destruction of the batteries, will give no heed to the manœuvres of the pilot, until it is too late, and the pilot will contrive that the frigate will seem to have been grounded by the tide."

"And this most excellent and amenable pilot," inquired Galloway, with clearing brow, "where is he to be found?"

"Thee may leave that to me," smiled Richard Skinner blandly, "he will be furnished without fail."

"We have a second frigate to consider, also," said Galloway, "not to mention several galleys and so-called gondolas. The capture of the *Delaware,* therefore, may prove insufficient to open the ferry."

"The other is of a size much less considerable; the galleys and gondolas are small craft. Once the *Delaware* is out of the way, Lord Cornwallis will be able to obtain free access to the Jersey shore."

"And what is still more important," commented Galloway, thoroughly conversant with every advantage to be gained, "it will enable him to intercept communication between the forts at Red Bank and on Mud Island, and Trenton above, for it is from Trenton that the garrisons in these American forts are obliged to draw their military stores."

"So I am aware," observed Richard Skinner, who had overlooked no point that added to the value of the plan that he had come to present.

"Your pilot's name?"

"There is no need that I should mention it, as yet, friend," returned Richard smoothly, for he had no mind to play too freely into Galloway's hand.

Joseph Galloway scowled slightly. He was not sure that he altogether trusted this rosy-faced Quaker of unrevealing lips and eyes, who, Tory though he was in secret, kept on good terms with rebels, yet claimed himself neutral. He reminded himself, however, that these very facts made him the better able to aid Tory plans, and serve Tory ends.

His brow cleared fully as he reflected thus, and there was heartiness in his tone as he said, "Have it your own way, Skinner. I leave it entirely to you to secure the man, and to see that he don't fail us."

Considering the interview ended, Galloway made as if to rise, but Richard Skinner remained seated, and the lawyer sank back again into his chair, to hear what further Skinner had to propose.

"Thee realizes as well as I," proceeded Richard Skinner, "that I have offered to perform an invaluable service to the Crown. One that justifies me in expecting a most substantial recompense."

"Certainly, certainly," acknowledged Galloway, without hesitation. "Your pilot and yourself. Of that there can be no question."

"A few pounds in gold will suffice the pilot," answered Skinner. "For myself, I expect something of magnitude. The plan is mine. The pilot I provide. The service to the Crown is immense. The successful occupation of the city, even for a few days, depends upon it, as you have already admitted. It will take from General Washington advantages greatly in his favor in his attempts to liberate Philadelphia. It removes from Gen-

eral Howe's path obstacles which would make his position here most precarious."

"Yes, yes," conceded Galloway, drumming with his long fingers upon the table, "and the reward will abundantly satisfy you, I am sure."

"I covet no position of influence or importance," went on the astute Quaker. "There are but two things that I would ask thee to obtain for me. I hear that thee is about to become Commissioner of the Port of Philadelphia. The Crown in power, American shipping here will be commandeered, no doubt, for British purposes. As thee knows, I am a shipping merchant. Can thee manage it that the ships which have been under the guidance of my firm shall come and go, ostensibly for the Crown's interests, but laden with cargoes in reality mine, and with the revenues flowing to me?"

"I will see that that is arranged."

"As to the second, there are properties, in and near Philadelphia, that I should welcome, in case, through the treasonable activities of their owners against the Crown, these should become confiscate. For instance: the Stanhope house on High Street, their family country-seat, Broadlands, near Gray's Ferry, and the Ridge Farm, in the vicinity of Valley Forge."

"You are not moderate in your demands," remarked Galloway, regarding him through half-closed lids.

"The services rendered are immense," Skinner reminded him, unabashed. "The recompense should be in proportion."

Galloway shrugged his shoulders, and an ironic smile flitted over his face. "I will do what I can to obtain these emoluments for you in due time," he said.

Richard Skinner was content with this. He knew that no man in the Colonies had stronger influence with the

Crown than this ambitious lawyer, and he saw no reason why England should not willingly pay him in coin that would take nothing directly from her exchequer. A farm, a town house, a country-seat, a few ships—all in a distant colony, what was that to her?

Knowing Reba's intense sympathy with the American cause, and the rebellious activities on her part that would naturally follow, he saw clear prospect of the confiscation of her properties when the Colonies were reduced to subjection. Since Hannah Stanhope would have none of him as a future husband for her niece, he had this not ill-founded hope of getting hold of her fortune by another, and less encumbered way.

It was easy to guess that Reba's inclinations might turn to Gilbert Westwood, in time, and that friend Hannah would favor such an outcome by every means in her power.

Richard had something against Gilbert besides the mere possibility of his crossing his path in regard to Reba. There had been a tense moment between Westwood and himself during the brief tarrying of the American army in the city after the Battle of the Brandywine. Gilbert had gone to the firm of Henry Skinner and Son, to collect, on his father's behalf, the income from Westwood shipping interests, and he, like Hannah, had been met with refusal of hard money, and a proffer of Continental bills. And Richard had not been chary of insulting innuendoes, and had met every protest with unshakable equanimity, and indifference, aware, as he was, that neither the Westwoods nor the Stanhopes dared risk the serious losses that would be entailed upon them by taking their interests out of his control at this crisis.

Gilbert, carried beyond himself, had heaped indignant scorn upon him, and had furnished Skinner with such an analysis of his character as had rankled in him deeply, in spite of the cool prudence that had prompted his successful concealment of his resentment.

Well, Gilbert should pay an hundredfold for every word of it, in the end. On that he was determined. Disgrace should overtake him, a disgrace which he, Richard Skinner, now saw his way to accomplish. There was no pilot that understood the Delaware River and its channels, its every shoal, its changing tides and currents, as did Seth Ousley, trusted and chosen pilot of Westwood ships, and in their special employ. No Westwood vessel touched dock that was not brought in by Ousley.

It was this pilot that Gilbert had offered and recommended for use on the frigate *Delaware*. It was this pilot that Richard Skinner purposed to suborn to his scheme.

Prior to his visit to Galloway, he had thoroughly sounded Ousley, and had gained his promise that for a definite sum of hard money in hand, he would ground the American ship of war.

At some auspicious time in the future, the treachery of the pilot, and the betrayal of the *Delaware,* could be made to look ill for Gilbert in the eyes of his countrymen, under the skilful construction that Richard meant to put upon it when he presented it in high American quarters.

Without further discussion, Skinner and Galloway parted company, and the hour was not out before the proposal had been broached to Cornwallis, and received by him with enthusiastic approval.

On the following morning three batteries began to

rise at the exact point on the waterside where they could best act against any American ship which might approach the city.

The work went forward with despatch, but the batteries were never completed. The frigate *Delaware,* attacking while they were still under process of erection, was grounded by the tide in such a position that it was impossible for her to use her guns. She was easily captured by the British, and the command of the ferry at High Street, and free access for them to the Jersey shore, followed as a direct consequence.

Chapter XII

On the third of October, though the ferry had been for some days under control of the enemy, the forts had not yet fallen.

At noontime of that day, Phoebe brought in to Hannah Stanhope a written message from an aged friend living in Germantown. It had been left at the door by a stocking dealer, not in the morning, on his way with his wares to the Market House, as had been intended, but on his return trip to his home.

"Has thee bad news, Aunt Hannah?" inquired Reba anxiously, for she saw that Friend Stanhope's face looked troubled as she read.

"Friend Anna Harkness suffers with her old complaint. Naught hath ever relieved it, she saith, but the herbs that I gave her in the past. They grow only in Friend Norris' medicinal herb bed, and are from seeds procured for her by Friend Bartram from some great botanist in foreign parts."

"But why should that trouble thee? Friend Norris responds generously to every call made upon her bounty. Indeed, she knows that if she did not, many would suffer, since none but she hath such herbs to bestow."

" 'Tis not that, child. It is that I can see no way to get them to Friend Harkness. The stocking dealer was to have carried the herbs back with him. But he is gone home. I like not to think of her continuance in agonizing pain. Yet I see no present help for it."

Reba sat thoughtful for an instant. Then, though she

expected to be refused, she made the offer that had been trembling on her tongue. "I will take the herbs, for surely she must not be allowed to suffer for lack of them."

"By no means shall thee go," exclaimed Hannah Stanhope, in consternation at the mere thought. "How can thee suppose that I would permit it. Germantown! Five miles away! Soldiers encamped, as we have heard, to the very centre of the village! I marvel that thee proposes it."

"And I that thee should refuse me." Reba rose to draw nearer to her aunt, and put her arms about her, for so she could best coax her. "Remember, Aunt Hannah, that Friend Harkness is in distress, and asks our help. Five miles are nothing, when one's horse is good. The road to Germantown is much traveled by city merchants, and countryfolk. I go in broad day, and as to the soldiers, though they are enemies, I grow used to them. Moreover, not all are so insufferably rude as those under our own roof. Besides, it might go ill with any British soldier who ventured to molest me, if I have a pass."

Hannah stroked her apron absently, delaying her answer, but Reba saw that her coaxing had not prevailed.

"Dear aunt," she began again, and kissed her, "we may as well look matters in the face. For some good reason, I may be compelled, at any moment, to go into the thick of danger, utterly alone. I have been a protected child, never stirring from under thy loving wing, unless I were safeguarded. But that was in the quiet times of peace. Now war surrounds us. Foes are beneath our very roof. Am I less safe from those without than from those within? What could thee do, sweet aunt, to protect me from insult in thy very presence? Or I, to protect thee? This is no great thing, after all, that I

would do. Friend Westwood will lend me Gilbert's horse. Friend Norris will provide the herbs. The pass I must get from the Provost-Marshal. In less than an hour from the time that I leave thee, I am in Germantown, and Friend Harkness eased thereafter of her pain. Before the sun sets, I shall be home again."

Thus on and on she pleaded, and in the end, Hannah, always tender toward sickness or suffering, gave way, admitting that, after all, the Germantown Road was as safe for travel as any of the city thoroughfares.

"Thy pass may not be quickly come by," she said, when she had yielded. "See to it first, and to the herbs last."

Reba was fortunate. For once, the necessary pass was obtained without long waiting. Friend Norris was at home, and gave the herbs cheerfully without a moment's delay. Gilbert's horse, fitted with Reba's own saddle, stood waiting in the stable when she came triumphantly in through the alley, prepared to bid goodbye to her Aunt Hannah, and mount, and ride away.

"Keep thy bonnet down," warned her aunt, in parting, "and on second thoughts, dear child, I think thee had best spend the night under Friend Harkness' roof. It is now near four of the clock, and dark falls early. I dare not have thee upon the road after night comes."

"Nor would I adventure it," replied Reba. "I will do exactly as thee bids me, Aunt Hannah, and in the morning I will ride in at the hour when the wool and stocking dealers are upon the road. That will ease thy mind for me, will it not?"

"Yea, greatly," agreed Hannah Stanhope, though she watched her ride away from the gate at the back of the garden with a troubled heart.

The Germantown Road crossed open country for sev-

eral miles before the outskirts of the village were reached, and its long straggling street of two miles began. Years before Reba's birth, it had been a main traveled road, used by Philadelphia gentlemen of substance, rolling over it in their coaches, or riding horseback daily to and from their country-seats, in the warm months of spring and summer. It was also the highway for the German yarn manufacturers, and stocking-makers, who brought in their products to their shops in the Market House. Countrymen followed it with their farm produce. Social life had flowed along it to Cliveden, the mansion of Chief-Justice Benjamin Chew, where his bevy of beautiful daughters held court, to dignified Fair Hill, and Stenton, to the Morris house, and the Wister home, to Chestnut Hill, and Mount Airy, haunts of the Tory aristocracy, and genteel Quaker sets of Philadelphia.

Some of these mansions were now closed, and given over to the caretaking of a servant or two, during the voluntary or enforced exile of their owners. But though the stream of social life had been interrupted, there was a steady passage along it of those who had business in the supplying of those wants common to peace and war alike. Hence there was no actual danger for Reba in riding along it without attendance on this autumn afternoon.

The blue October haze, the crisp cool air, the red and gold creeping into the foliage, the reaped fields, the flocking birds, that belong to this favored month of the year, made her forget, for a little, that war was in the land, for once she had left behind her in Philadelphia the soldiers who had entered with Lord Cornwallis, she encountered not many more than she had been accustomed to meet, in any case, on her journeyings to Germantown in past years.

She gave rein to Juno, and the strong bay mare, glad to escape from the tedium of her stable, shook out her rich black mane, at the first sniff of country air, and breaking into the swift trot that Gilbert was wont to encourage, brought her almost to School Lane.

Here she received abrupt reminder of the presence of the enemy. On both sides of the road were the encampments of the main body of General Howe's army; the left wing, under General Knyphausen, to the west, covered by Sir Charles Grey's strong detachment of chasseurs; to the east lay Grant, commanding the right wing.

Although the winding street hid them from her, a mile further up, in a field directly across from Cliveden, lay Colonel Musgrave's regiment, and light infantry and a small battery on Mount Airy commanded the northern road.

Having shown her pass to the guard, who demanded it, Reba curbed Juno's inclination to a rapid gait, and she trotted soberly past the busy encampment, and up the Main Street, lined on either side by peach trees, now stripped of their luscious fruit.

A short distance above the Market House was the dwelling of Friend Harkness. Built entirely of the grey stone of Pennsylvania, it stood retired a few yards from the street, within an old-fashioned garden. A flagged box-bordered walk led to its white front door.

Friend Harkness, a tall angular woman, her thin face drawn with a suffering that no effort of the will could enable her to conceal, sat in a darkened room, her forehead in her hand, her lids closed, patiently enduring the acute neuralgia in her head, that she had hoped would have had its end shortly after the return of the stocking dealer, bringing the wonder-working herbs. He had

passed by without them, and now no help was to be expected. She was steeling herself, as best she could, to the prospect of a second night of misery.

It was with the liveliest appreciation and gratitude, therefore, that she saw Reba enter, bringing the means for her speedy relief.

"That thee should have come, thyself!" she exclaimed, tottering to her feet to receive the treasure. "At such a risk! My pain hath been excessive, beyond anything that I have been called upon to sustain hitherto! But now, thanks to thy courage, and the goodness of my friends, it will soon be assuaged. I trust that none molested thee on the way here."

"Nay, all went well," Reba assured her. "But do thee sit quiet, Friend Harkness. I will take the herbs to the kitchen, and make the decoction for thee, myself. Friend Norris hath instructed me as to the manner of doing it."

The sufferer was content enough to have it so, and Reba presently brought back to her from the kitchen a bowl of steaming brew. Under the soothing influence of it, the lines of anguish began to disappear from her face, and, after a little, she fell into a sweet sleep upon the sofa.

She awoke in an hour, refreshed, and quite herself, ready to enjoy the unexpected pleasure of having her young guest in the house overnight.

"Sarah shall have out the preserved peaches, and shall make waffles for thy supper. I know thee has a sweet tooth. Tonight thee shall sleep in the front chamber that looks out upon the garden. I know it is thy favorite."

Thus the good woman made much of her, in her zeal to repay her recent kindness.

Justice having been done to black Sarah's cookery, curtains were drawn, candles lit, yellow flames danced

behind the quaint brass fire-dogs in the prim best room of the old-time Quaker home, and the evening passed quickly in Friend Harkness' company.

The stars were of that dazzling brilliancy which betokens foul weather near at hand, when Reba threw open the casement window in the front bedchamber, that she might look out upon the garden, filled with dahlias, and chrysanthemums, and other late blooms, their colors obscured by the night.

She leaned out, drank the pure air, looked to the stars, sighed, and wondered where Gilbert was tonight, while she was safe.

The little village slept along the length of its single meandering street, and soon Reba slept too.

Through the watches of the night, advancing from the north, by four roads, the Germantown Road, the Monatawny Road, the Limekiln Road, the old York Road, to converge at the Market House, came General Washington with his army, recruited since the defeat of Brandywine to a strength of eight thousand Continental troops, and three thousand militia.

Two intercepted letters had given him to know that General Howe had detached part of his forces from around Germantown, for the purpose of reducing the American works at Billingsport, so as to open the Delaware River to Admiral Howe's fleet.

General Washington seized upon the opportunity to strike what he hoped might be a decisive blow at the main body of Howe's army, by surprising the encampment at Germantown.

His was a bold and daring plan. Coming upon the enemy under cover of the night, from four directions, he purposed to overwhelm their advance guards, and attack their left wing in front, from above, on the Ger-

mantown Road; to turn the left flank and attack their rear, from the Monatawny Road; to attack their right wing from the Limekiln Road; and turn their right, and fall upon their rear, from the old York Road.

If, as he hoped, he should succeed in crushing the right wing, and folded back the entire British army against the Schuylkill, he could compel surrender.

It was an audacious conception, for the Americans, with all their other tremendous handicaps, were inferior in numbers, but it was based on cool calculation, as well as animated by a fiery and daring courage.

In it he showed his military genius, which had only waited, with cautious vigilance, until the opportune moment arrived, to rise and strike.

Throughout that night of October 3rd the Americans marched silently, unobtrusively, down over these four roads, to close in upon sleeping Germantown.

Gilbert Westwood marched with them.

Chapter XIII

Crack and rattle of musketry, and the deafening roar of cannon, startled Reba awake. Involuntarily she sprang from bed, half-dazed by the shock of it.

Darkness surrounded her. Barely distinguishing the half closed casement in the gloom, she groped her way to it, pushed it wide open, and peered out.

It was the hour of sunrise, yet, for all that the window revealed to her, it might have been a midnight barren of moon or stars. On this morning of October 4th, 1777, a dense black fog had settled like a pall over the village, and surrounding landscape, making it impossible to perceive objects only a few feet distant.

These were the unmistakable sounds of battle that assailed her ears, but where, and how near, was the conflict? With the evidence of sight denied her, she had no answer to the question. She guessed that the fight had not yet reached her immediate vicinity, although she could not doubt, from what her straining sense told her, that it was proceeding her way.

Hark! Was it not coming from both ways? From north and south? Yes, and from east, as well? The village was being attacked on three sides! Could it be that the British were about to be entrapped? That would mean that the one street of Germantown would become the theatre of furious struggle. In such case, any house, or perhaps every house, along its course, might become involved, as a bit of vantage ground, to be sharply contested, and in that contesting become a ruin.

Whatever emergencies arose, and there might be many, she must be cool, collected, prepared to meet them, if she would be of use. She stilled her quivering limbs, put grip upon her faculties, lighted a candle, and began to dress.

At the same moment she heard a step in the passage, followed by a tap at the door, and the turning of the doorknob. Candle in hand Friend Harkness entered. Agitated though her pale face showed her to be, she was dressed with her usual exactness. Her kerchief was evenly crossed at its proper angle; her sheer close cap encircled her thin cheeks as primly, its strings were tied as correctly under her pointed chin as though the sounds that had roused her from her rest were dying away instead of drawing nearer.

"That is right, child. Clothe thyself quickly. Thee has heard the guns. We shall be in the path of fightings. That thee should be here at such a time, and on my account! Thy Aunt Hannah will be sick with alarm for thee!"

In spite of the fortitude and composure enjoined upon Friends, even in the midst of the most signal dangers, or adversities, and her usual determined enforcement of this rule in her own life and behavior, the good Quakeress found herself shaken, and keenly anxious for the safety of this young creature, come to her on an errand of mercy, and thrown thereby into a situation of extreme peril.

"Do not concern thyself so sorely because of me, Friend Harkness," consoled Reba, as she slipped her feet hastily into her buckled shoes, and threw on her dress. "It is only because I am a maid that I am not in far greater danger than I am here, in thy house, with battle round me. I would be glad to shoulder a musket,

and join the fight for liberty. I envy every soldier who has the chance today."

"Say not so, my child," ejaculated Friend Harkness, shocked beyond measure. "Thee is a quiet Quaker maid, and should turn thy thoughts away from fightings to thoughts of peace."

"That will I do when peace returns," averred Reba boldly, "but I am a daughter of freedom, and for whatever brings true freedom to my country, I would strive with all my might."

"Let freedom come," said Friend Harkness devoutly, "but let it come by peaceful ways, as Christ would have it."

"Forget not," Reba reminded her, "that He Who preached peace, said also, when He thought the occasion right, 'I am not come to send peace, but a sword,' and, 'A man's foes shall be those of his own household.' "

Fully clothed now, she was on the point of returning to the casement, but Friend Harkness interposed. "Come below with me, Reba. Thee will be safer far, and if firing becomes hot about the house, thee can withdraw to the cellar. Nay," she went on, as Reba looked her amazed protest, "I must insist for thine aunt's sake."

"To the cellar! I, to the cellar! Does thee think thus poorly of me?" exclaimed Reba. "I will go with thee below, since thee requests it, but thee must let me try to pierce, as best I can, this blackness of fog, so that I may know how and where the battle goes."

"The shutters below must remain closed and barred," returned Friend Harkness firmly, "I cannot look on war." And then more gently, "Nor should thee, my child. Besides it is my duty to protect thee as best I may."

"Thee needs neither to behold, nor to protect, dear Friend Harkness," Reba assured her softly, yet deter-

mined not to forsake her post. "Do thee go below, to whatever safety thee can compass, but leave me here. Indeed I must stay and take what comes," she insisted. "I must watch, nay, rather hear the fighting, and haply learn its course."

"Then must I bide with thee," said Friend Harkness resignedly. Faithful to the beliefs and practices of a lifetime, she forbore to go near the window, lest the fog should lift, and show her what she was forbid to see. Seating herself upon a chair beside the bureau, her back to the window, her hands folded patiently in her lap, she fell into grave meditation.

Reba leaned forth of the casement with straining eyes and ears.

The ominous sounds grew suddenly close at hand. A lurid glare burst on the fog. Detonations of artillery shook the walls, and every pane in the casement shook with a violence that came near to shattering it.

Before her eyes, as in a sinister phantasmagoria, forms passed rapidly, the more terrible because vague, and seen only in part, rushing for a second only into view, to vanish as swiftly.

Now it was an arm with a bayonet, striking into the seeming void, again, a grim and powder-blackened face, above shoulders clothed in patriot brown or blue; then a scarlet coat showed faint pink through the fog curtain, and again a mass of soldiers hurled themselves forward in a charge. A Continental hat with a bit of white paper conspicuously displayed was visible above a countenance blurred and almost obliterated, as the soldier bore his enemy down. This she could guess, though both their battling forms were lost again in fog and stifling smoke.

Flashings of red followed the discharge of musketry,

and ruddy glow amid the drifting murk accompanied the firing of cannon.

On a sudden, the fog, opening like a tunnel, made a space that revealed to her foe grappling with foe, while lines of red and blue swayed back and forth in furious combat. This, too, became hidden behind the vaporous uncanny wall.

Shouts of triumph from patriot throats rang suddenly through smoke and reeking mist, and Reba, hearing, felt her heart leap wildly in answer. She longed to shout with them, but she was a maid of her times, and her tongue clove dry in her mouth, and she made no sound.

Because of the steep rise and fall of that village street, and had she had power to brush away that dusky curtain of fog and smoke, she might have seen from where she stood, much of the varying fortunes of the fierce struggle on that fate-ridden morning. Sullivan's column and the American right wing, accompanied by Washington, routing the British light infantry, and capturing their battery on Mount Airy, the overwhelming of the British regulars, who, under Musgrave, retreated into Cliveden, Judge Chew's vacant mansion, where using its solid stone masonry as a fortress, they poured forth a heavy fire in reply to the American artillery.

She might have followed with her eyes the rush of the American column down Main Street, leaving Maxwell behind to besiege the British, too strongly entrenched, however, behind those massive stone walls to be compelled to yield.

She could have observed the breaking up of American right and left wings by insurmountable obstacles and barriers in their path which the fog enshrouded; the terrible onslaught of Sullivan upon Knyphausen and his

veterans, and of Greene on the British right wing, forcing them to break ranks before them in confusion, and presaging hopeless defeat for Howe's army, in spite of the warning that the firing around Cliveden, a mile away had given.

She would have seen, too, General Washington, directing the battle from the little porch of the Billmeyer house, on Main Street, with golden victory for the American arms almost achieved in spite of the confusion resulting from the enforced division of the right and left wings of the Continentals by the obstructions at Cliveden and inability to distinguish them in the unexpected darkness; would have seen Anthony Wayne driving the enemy before him, swaying to the east.

And then the fateful turn.

Stephens, drunk from too many pulls upon his canteen during his chill night ride, bringing his division of Continentals against the rear of Wayne's triumphant men, and mistaking them in the fog for enemies, poured a furious fire into them.

There were mad grapplings of friend with friend, and then, while fiercely attacked by their own men from behind, struggling to extricate themselves, and hopelessly entangled by being abruptly thrown upon Sullivan's division, sudden panic ran like wildfire through the army. Panic complete, though brief.

And in that moment, when in fog and confusion, the Commander-in-Chief could neither learn the situation that had developed from the blunder of Stephens, nor correct the hideous entanglement that had come about, the British recovered themselves, the battle was lost for the Americans, and general and orderly retreat became the only measure that could save the Continental Army.

Reba, at the casement, watched and listened as though

she dared not miss one terrifying sound or sign. By the phantoms, hard pressed, and fighting desperately, that appeared and disappeared in smoke and flame, and reeking murk, by shouts of triumph, hoarse cries of defeat, piercing shrieks of wounded that rent the air, by clashing of sword and glint of bayonet, by men scattering in wild panic and defeat, by discharging of cannon and muskets, by recall and swift rallying to orderly retreat, she gained perhaps as much knowledge as any could, of the conflict of that morning; for none saw, save in brief glimpses, the course of battle then, nor none knows it, except in fragments, to this day.

A musket ball, soaring high, whizzed in at the casement, passed the girl's head, and buried itself in the white-washed wall of the room, scattering fine fragments of plaster far and wide.

"Did thee see how thee was imperilled?" exclaimed Friend Harkness, in consternation, from where she sat rigid, her thin hands folded as though she were at prayer.

"Yes," answered Reba, but did not stir.

Her whole soul was concentrated upon that blurred section of battle before her, and to herself, or to her possible danger, she gave no thought whatever. Her countrymen were fighting valiantly for life, and for that God-given principle which transcends life. Gilbert was there,—of that she felt confident,—and with him, and by his side her spirit fought, in an intensity of patriotic devotion, and of revolt against the tyranny of which every one of those dimly-seen red uniforms was to her a symbol.

As the sun had ascended the heavens, the darkness had given way to a dense grey, less impenetrable to the eye, than the black obscurity which had preceded it.

Nevertheless, not fifty feet away from the spectator all objects were still wiped out, or were only faintly to be discerned.

Thus it had been for some time, and still continued, during the bewilderment brought about by Stephens' blunder, the short-lived panic, and ensuing orderly retreat.

At the instant when the tide was about to turn away from victory to defeat, Reba, her gaze fixed tensely upon the narrow space before her, saw a figure leap into it from the gloom beyond,—a Continental soldier, musket in hand, and in the grey hunting-shirt and trousers of a Pennsylvania battalion.

His cap was long since gone in the stress of the conflict. His straight dark hair tossed in wild disarray about his face—a face alive with relentless zeal, and indomitable courage. His eyes were as blue flames burning their way through biting smoke and blinding fog, and every steel-like muscle in his tall frame was bent toward victory. It was Gilbert Westwood, rushing upon the scattering foe.

Above the clamor that arose from every side, she could hear the loud cry that issued from his throat,—and hearing, was convinced that glorious victory for the patriots was come.

"They flee! The British flee!" she exulted, her hands clasped convulsively to her breast. "We drive them back! Victory, victory is ours!"

Pride and joy choked her utterance; a joy short-lived, for even as she spoke, Gilbert, struck, as she believed, by a bullet from the rallying foe, fell headlong into the blood-red mist that marked the firing of the enemy's musketry.

Reba sank back against the casement with a groan.

Friend Harkness, ashen with solicitude, sprang to her. "Child, child," she murmured, "thee is wounded. 'Tis as I feared it would be!"

"Not I," sobbed Reba, her hand at her bursting throat, "'Tis Gilbert,—Gilbert Westwood. I saw him fall. Alas, Friend Harkness, I fear me he is dead."

"Alas, alas! These are the woes and sufferings that come from fightings!" deplored the Quakeress, casting her eyes toward the ceiling. "I thank the Lord's mercy that thee is safe. But tempt Providence no further. Come away, child. Come away with me."

But Reba would not go. Gilbert was yonder, stricken down, bleeding, perhaps dying, trampled by many feet it might be, where he lay hidden under the dense grey mantle of the fog. Striving to pierce it, but striving in vain, she saw, in a moment more, other Continentals falling, as he had fallen, stumbling toward the spot where he must be lying.

Struggling lines, stumbling forms, redcoats pushing the patriots back, and back, and back, as confusion seized them. Sharp commands of generals calling their broken divisions to a rally; swift response to the order for retreat; and then the prompt withdrawal from the lost field.

Reba could bear no more. White and sickened, she closed her lids over eyes long strained by eager watching, as though she would shut out forever such sights as she had just beheld.

Friend Harkness led her gently to a chair, and forced her to sink down upon it. She said not a word, but let the girl cling to her, let the shaking sobs have way, and grief pour itself out.

When the fog lifted, it showed the village street empty of combatants, artillery silent, roadway and sidewalks

strewn with killed and wounded. Pursuing the enemies of the Crown, the British had left the victims to the surgeons, and to those whose duty it was to bury the dead. The losses of the British had been five hundred and thirty-five men; those of the Americans six hundred and seventy-three.

In the silence that followed tumult, Reba roused herself, left the shelter of Friend Harkness' arms, crept to the window, and looked down upon the havoc that war had wrought.

A wan sun shed sickly light over the heaps of victims. British regulars, and Hessians were mingled with patriot militia from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and the Jerseys. The square around the Market House was a shambles. The streets ran blood. Bullet-riddled house-walls, and shutters, shattered glass of window-panes, broken fences, scorched and blasted trees, and gardens, earth torn by artillery, powder-blackened rocks, formed a woeful background to the piteous heaps of suffering humanity.

Here a soldier slowly lifted himself, to stagger or to crawl, to a spot less dreadful, less agony-provoking than the one he occupied. There another feebly strove to free himself of whatever encumbrance cut off breath. But most lay where they had fallen, writhing in agony, groaning heavily, or stifling complaint even in the hour of extremity.

Nowhere among them did Reba's seeking eyes discover Gilbert.

She turned and beckoned to Friend Harkness, who stood where she had left her.

"I beseech thee, come and look," she murmured faintly, "and tell me what we must do to relieve this terrible anguish."

Although the Quakeress had turned her eyes away from the strife of battle, at the call of mercy she came. Came, and cast one glance upon the scene, and hastened to the door.

Reba followed her in silence, ready, now, to obey whatever she should suggest.

Friend Harkness descended the stair, and went swiftly to the dining-parlor. She opened the sideboard, took out a pair of empty flasks, and filled them to the brim with brandy from a large decanter. Keeping one, she gave the other to Reba, and went to the barred front door. Opening it, she stepped out into the growing light.

Upon the very doorstep lay a poor unconscious wretch. He had crept to it, upon hands and knees, thinking to die there. His head and chest were sorely wounded, and a pool of blood stained the white marble of the step.

The Quakeress knelt, and held the brandy to his lips. For a moment he revived, but quickly sank back into oblivion. For him it was too late.

But there were others on every hand; in the garden itself, beyond the broken fence, along the highroad. To these Friend Harkness and Reba went, unhindered by the guards who looked on. The huddled forms, the groans, the gasping sighs, cut Reba to the soul. She, like her friend, employed herself in administering the fiery stimulant, in stanching, as best they could, the blood that gushed from wounds, until the surgeon could render better aid, in giving drink to those who begged for it hoarsely with swollen tongues.

Tortured limbs were helped to easier postures. Death damps were wiped from icy brows. Last messages were caught from dying lips, and pitiful keepsakes received from stiffening fingers to be transmitted, when occasion could be found, to those who would dearly prize them.

Neither Reba, nor the Quaker matron made distinction between red coat or blue. Their tendance went to every one. Here were human creatures in anguish, whatever garments covered them. Mercy drew no line.

They labored incessantly, forgetting food or drink for themselves.

The rough wagons came at last, in which the wounded were to be conveyed to Philadelphia, and the American prisoners to temporary confinement in the State House.

In all her beneficent ministrations, Reba thought constantly of Gilbert, tried to find him, hoped at every step that it might be granted to her to come upon him. Underlying every other emotion was the great ache and grief of knowing that somewhere he lay in want of help, and that she could not reach him.

She saw the last file of prisoners march away under guard; saw the country wains loaded with wounded, laid in heaps upon straw over planks, departing with their groaning burdens, but so far as she could discover, Gilbert was among neither. Beyond a certain point, the guards had not permitted either herself or Friend Harkness to pass, filled though the square around the Market House was with dead and dying.

The day was already far spent when Friend Harkness touched her on the arm, and said, "Opportunity hath come to send thee home, Reba. A British officer hath provided a guard for thee to thine own door. Thee must ride past a sad procession, it is true, but go thee must, and immediately, for thine Aunt Hannah is in terror for thee. Very weary thee is, my sweet child, forgetting thyself utterly as thee has, to show mercy to others."

On Gilbert's horse, escorted on either side by a red-coated cavalryman, Reba, her heart low in her breast, rode home.

Chapter XIV

A CANDLE burned in the family-room of Benjamin Westwood. His dwelling had not been impinged upon by British soldiers, and he was free to nurse, in his accustomed place, the gout that held him prisoner through inclement weather in every season of the year, and almost without intermission during autumn and winter.

Had it not been for the neighborly attentions of Hannah Stanhope and Reba, in the absence of Gilbert, he would have been forlorn indeed.

His disabled state was intolerable to him this evening, for rumors of the battle had come to him in snatches throughout the day, from the moment when Lord Cornwallis, springing from his bed at the first sound of the guns at dawn, had gone at a double-quick to reinforce General Howe with two battalions, until now, when wagons laden with British wounded were rumbling into the city, and the American prisoners were already temporarily confined in the State House.

Unable to walk forth and verify a single one of these rumors, racked by anxiety concerning his son, tortured by the sharp stabs and merciless twinges in his gouty knees, his condition seemed unendurable. Large beads of sweat stood out upon his forehead, testifying to what it cost him to maintain patience.

Familiar footsteps in the passage-way leading from the back of the house aroused him from the depths of his misery. He turned his head toward the door, dread-

ing, yet longing for fresh news of the battle, and its aftermath.

It was Reba who entered, pallid and hollow-eyed, but self-forgetful still, as she had been throughout that terrible day.

Benjamin Westwood did not stir in his chair, but his eyes sought hers in mute interrogation.

She gave immediate response. "Friend Westwood, Aunt Hannah and I have filled baskets with comforts for our patriots imprisoned in the State House. We must take them to them tonight, for tomorrow our men may be transferred to where we cannot reach them. We have been told that there are no wounded there, that the Americans carried all of theirs with them in their retreat, yet this may be a false report. In any case, the captured are in want, and to those we must go. Nor could we have rest of mind, dear friend," she ended, "until we learn for thee, and for ourselves, whether Gilbert be among them."

"Alive or," he paused, and then forced the words from his lips, "dead. That I must know, in order to endure. He was ever of a singularly robust frame, and if he be wounded there is hope, for he is among his friends. If he be dead, then I am sorely bereaved."

"And we," thought Reba sadly, holding back from his overburdened heart what she had seen that morning —a grey-clad figure, only too clearly recognized, leaping through red mist to topple suddenly into dark void. While a vestige of hope or doubt remained, the pathetic old man by the hearth should have the benefit of it, for how could she know that Gilbert was not among the wounded, and therefore in a measure safe, instead of captive, or numbered with the dead?

"Have hope," she counseled bravely, striving to bear

her own courage up. Bending, she kissed him in daughterly fashion upon his wrinkled cheek. "Aunt Hannah waits with the baskets, and I must leave thee, but I will come, when we return, no matter how late the hour, to tell thee what we have found."

Two cloaked and bonneted figures, laden with well-filled baskets, emerged a few minutes later from the alley into the street, Reba carrying the lantern which the regulations of General Howe required foot-passengers to take with them after dark.

"Keep close to me, child," murmured her aunt. "I like not to have thee out of my sight." When Reba had come home to her from Germantown unhurt, but white and unstrung from what she had undergone, Hannah Stanhope had folded her in her arms, in devout and silent thanksgiving, as though she could never let her go.

They met few soldiers on their way, until they came out of Fifth Street into Chestnut, but there they encountered them in large numbers, flushed with their recent victory, and such as were not on duty, demanding and receiving from those who had participated in the battle such an account of it as the small section that had been visible to them made possible.

Coffee houses and taverns were filled to overflowing. Those Philadelphia Tories, who had paraded the streets of Germantown over four hundred strong, a week earlier, and had taken and jailed many of the friends of the Free States of America, now triumphed through the streets a second time, celebrating the victory with the British.

On either side of the door of the State House stood a line of soldiers on guard, and Hannah Stanhope found difficulty in obtaining entrance, for herself and Reba, to the prisoners. It is doubtful whether they would have

succeeded, if one of the British cavalrymen, who had been escort to Reba from Germantown, had not come out of the door, by good chance, while they were pleading their cause.

Reba, seizing the opportunity, accosted him. "Sir, I beg thee to get leave for us to fetch in this food to our suffering friends."

Unable to see her face clearly, he took her for a stranger. " 'Tis not my province, my good lass, to do so. Apply to the officer on duty."

He would have passed on, but Reba showed him her countenance in the light of the lantern, and to gain her good end, spoke of what, in other case, she would have forborne to mention.

"In Germantown street, this morning, sir, I ministered to the wounded and dying of my enemies. Will thee not, because of that, aid my aunt and me, in our effort to bring relief, in turn, to our own men? I ask it of thee, who escorted me safely home, only a few hours since."

"Jove! The little Quaker angel of the battlefield!" exclaimed the young cavalryman, his eyes brightening. "It's good fortune for you that I came just now. Except for that,—well, I cannot promise certainly, to get leave for you, but mark you this: no words of mine shall be spared to accomplish it."

He swung on his spurred heel, and went back into the State House. A door opened and closed, and time slipped by, while the two grey figures waited in the dull glow of the lantern, their baskets at their feet, with the redcoat soldiers, on guard, standing as impassively as blocks of wood, on either side of them.

At length a firm step echoed down the corridor, and the officer returned with a paper in his hand. "Here is

the permit," he announced. "You will find the prisoners on the upper floor."

He was about to leave them, but on second thought, he stooped, picked up the heavy baskets, and mounted the stair with them to the long room where the American prisoners were confined.

"'Tis a great kindness which thee has shown us," murmured Reba.

"Which we shall not soon forget, friend," added Hannah.

"Naught but a fair return," quoth he, smiling, and left them.

Their permit inspected by the guard, they were given admittance. The vast chamber was filled with fit subjects for their bounty. Half-starved, wretched creatures they were, although here and there one showed a frame of greater endurance, or one, come more recently from the abundant tables of home, was not yet wasted like his comrades. Nevertheless, all had fasted long, and the meagre ration of dry bread and water, dealt out to them that evening by the British, had done little more than tantalize their ravenous appetites.

Huge slices of bread and meat vanished now in hungry maws, and the stock in the baskets dwindled fast.

Most of the men watched eagerly for their approach, but here and there a poor fellow crouched dejected on the floor, in a torpor of such weariness and misery as made him oblivious to what went on around him. In the dim light, and in the positions which they had assumed, the features of these were difficult to make out.

Whether or not all could be fed, Reba was determined that every one must be seen, for though she had little hope that she would find Gilbert among them, she must

satisfy herself that she had by no mischance overlooked him.

"Aunt Hannah," she said, unable longer to bear the suspense of slow progress, "I must leave my basket with thee, while I look for Gilbert."

"That is best," agreed Hannah.

Casting the rays of her lantern to right and left she advanced, her seeking eyes passing none, until by some pitying word, or gentle inquiry, she had compelled him to raise his head, and give her view of his countenance.

Many a soldier there wore the familiar grey linen of the Pennsylvania battalion, but it was too stained and blackened by the morning's battle, to be told for what it was. Many faces, smoke-begrimed, and wildly framed in matted, disheveled hair, would have been hard to recognize, even by those who knew them best.

Reba wound her way in and out among them, coming nearer and nearer to the farther wall, and still no sign of Gilbert. At the wall, perforce, her quest must end.

With a sinking heart she approached it.

Against the side wall, his back to it for support, was a motionless figure, knees bent, dark head bowed upon them, in the dead sleep of exhaustion. His folded arms surrounded and hid his features. Ragged sleeves fell away from his elbows. His tattered shirt was scorched. His hair was singed.

Reba looked askance at him, but he bore no resemblance to the one she sought, except in the set of his shoulders, and in the shape of his bent head. In these, she fancied she discerned something not altogether unfamiliar, though she felt no real conviction of it. He slept, and sorely he must need it.

Unless his head were lifted, she must remain in doubt.

Should she awake him, who was likely to be an utter stranger, from the merciful sleep that engulfed him? Awake him to fresh realization of the wretchedness that he would fain forget?

She paused, in indecision, her lantern leveled upon him, and then, remembering that she had still a little farther to go, reminding herself that after all, this was no wounded man, reminding herself that she had, with her own eyes, seen Gilbert fall stricken, she turned to leave him. Let this poor fellow rest. He could not be the one whom she sought.

From sheer weariness, she stumbled at the moment, and touched against the foot of the sleeping soldier.

A sharp groan answered the jarring contact, slight though it had been.

Reba, looking back remorsefully, beheld his face revealed. His eyes were tightly closed under frowning brows, his features worked with pain. Yet smitten through and through as she was by pity for his suffering, joy soared above pity, and drew a glad cry from her lips.

"Gilbert! 'Tis thee! 'Tis thee!"

His eyes opened wide at her voice, and his countenance cleared. "Reba!" he exclaimed, gazing at her as though she were a vision, so sweet, so welcome, was her lovely face.

She set her lantern down precipitately, and knelt beside him, her hand upon his shoulder. "Thee is in pain, Gilbert. I have hurt thee. Where is thy wound? Hath it been dressed, or have they left thee to suffer untended?" These questions in one single tender breath.

"Nay, 'tis no wound. 'Tis but a wrenched ankle, yet it doth give me keen agony when 'tis stirred ever so little. 'Twill pass. I tripped across a stone, in the fog

this morning, and did myself this despite. It angers me, for it caused my capture."

"Yes, yes. I saw thee fall, but thought thee wounded, perhaps killed. It made me sick with fear for thee."

"Thee saw me? How could that be?"

"I was in Germantown, overnight with Friend Harkness, having gone to take herbs to her for the distress in her head. The battle woke me. What I could see, for fog and dark, was fearsome. I fain would shut out memory of it." Her hazel eyes dimmed, and a momentary faintness seized her.

"Thank God no harm came to thee," murmured Gilbert devoutly. "How easily it might have."

After an instant's silence, he went on: " 'Tis good to see thee, Reba,—good. I had not hoped for such a blessing in this comfortless place."

"Thee shall see Aunt Hannah, too. She is yonder, feeding the men. I will fetch her to bind thy ankle. Hers is a rare skill. She can greatly ease thy pain."

Every morsel in both baskets had been bestowed by the time Reba reached her aunt's side, with her news of mingled good and ill. Without a word, Hannah Stanhope shook a large cloth, in the bottom of the basket, free of crumbs, and went to give aid. "Thy father's heart will overflow with thankfulness that thee lives, Gilbert," were her first words. "As does mine," she added, as she tore the cloth in strips to bind his hugely swollen ankle.

Delicate though her deft touch was, he could not but wince, nor smother a groan now and again while the binding was in progress, but when all was done, much comfort had been given.

"We must leave thee till tomorrow," said Hannah rising. "The guard comes, doubtless to say that we have overstayed our time."

"Where I shall be tomorrow, who can say?" answered Gilbert, his eyes dwelling lingeringly upon his friends. "But tonight, at least, I have had the joy of your presence. Give my love and duty to my father, and bid him not to despair."

"Do not thee despair," whispered Reba. "If thee be gone when we come again, we shall never rest until we find thee, nor cease to endeavor for thy release."

Before the morning light shone upon the State House steeple, while Reba still slept the sleep of exhaustion in the tiny bedroom that was now hers, and while Benjamin Westwood, his worst fears relieved, had found some respite from his malady, the American prisoners, under strict guard of redcoats, were marched from the room where they had spent the night, to the Stone Prison, called the Provost, on Walnut Street, to be confined there.

Chapter XV

The large grey stone building of the Provost faced northward on Walnut Street, to a prospect of shanties and tumble-down houses across the way, and on Delaware Sixth Street looked eastward to the gloomily suggestive view of the Potters' Field, long since become Independence Square.

A depressing view for those already sufficiently wretched in mind and body; yet it is something to a prisoner, to be able to look forth upon the world of men at all.

To Gilbert Westwood it was an inestimable boon, and every day, when by the striking of the light from the windows upon the wall of the room where he was imprisoned, he knew that mid-afternoon was come, he took his stand at one of the two or three barred windows on the Walnut Street side, which had been left unshuttered.

There, with gaze fixed upon the pavement opposite, he waited, and knew that his waiting would not be unrewarded, for at that hour, or near it, the slight figure of a girl, in a cloak of Quaker grey, would appear, to pass slowly along, with her eyes lifted to the window whence he looked down.

Reba had found him, as she had declared she would, and came each day, in this manner, to lift a smiling face, which was as a ray of purest sunshine to him, in his rat-infested, filthy prison.

Three weeks had passed since he had entered it. In that time he had learned what imprisonment could mean

under the brutal, drunken, British Provost Marshal, Captain Cunningham. Loathsome food, scanty and rotten straw for a bed, curses, kicks, insults, blankets refused, even the miserable rations lacking when Cunningham from ill-humor withheld them, or from cupidity sold them to outsiders, to swell his greedy purse.

Only rarely, during that time, had Reba and her aunt been able to obtain permission to visit Gilbert, and this for a few moments only, but in them Hannah had given messages from his ailing father, and money, to purchase what additions he could to his scanty diet; and Reba had whispered that when she had formed a plan for his escape that gave prospect of success, she would give him a sign, as she walked by, in order that he might be ready to co-operate with her. If she should unloose her bonnet-strings, he was to understand that the plan was made, and the time ripe.

Week after week had gone by, however, and the sign had not been forthcoming.

In the meantime he had endeavored to restore his ankle to its normal strength. The wrench had been deep and severe. A limping gait would inevitably betray him, and he must overcome it, before he dared attempt escape.

At first his sole effort had been to cure; his second thought was, to cure, and yet to conceal the cure until the very moment of escape, for a normal gait at that time would help to conceal his identity from those who might suspect it. Therefore, although his foot increased in strength, he purposely halted markedly upon it, when he took his hour of exercise daily, in the walled prison-yard with his mates. Only at night, barefooted, in the dark, did he test its power, while those around him slept.

For several days past, he had felt sure that he could walk freely, without betraying himself, and he watched the more eagerly for Reba's sign.

Difficulties manifold had stood in the way of her giving it. In the beginning, neither she, nor her aunt, nor Benjamin Westwood, had been able to evolve any plan that gave the faintest hope of happy outcome. It was not until they had exhausted their combined ingenuities, that suddenly, a daring idea sprang full-fledged into her own mind.

She was preparing to cross Chestnut Street, one morning, on an errand to Debby Norris, when a regiment of foot-soldiers swung past her, their uniforms scarlet, faced with blue.

Often, in her walks by the prison, she had seen the young officer in command of this regiment, sometimes entering, sometimes leaving the prison. On one of her visits to Gilbert, she had noticed him laughing and chatting with the prisoners, in the room where the Americans were confined, and Gilbert had told her that he was a good-natured sort of fellow, who went in and out among them, in his idle hours, unhindered, whenever it pleased him to amuse himself thus. The sentries had become thoroughly accustomed to this, and no longer paid the least attention to his comings and goings.

The first time that she had seen him, Reba had been struck by a resemblance in his height and figure to Gilbert. His hair was dark, also, and his shoulders broad, and square. Had the two been dressed alike, the one might, at a casual glance, easily have been mistaken for the other, provided the face were not clearly seen.

She had noticed it, but had thought no more of it, until the morning when she saw him marching at the head of his men. Then, in a flash, it came to her, that if

only she could procure such a uniform for Gilbert, and get it to him secretly, he might put it on, when dusk came, and at the time when the sentries were changed, might simulate this officer, and walk boldly out of the unlocked door, and past the guards, into the street. Once there, with the most important difficulty overcome, the rest might be made possible.

But the great stumbling-block in the carrying out of this scheme, which in the beginning appeared to be insuperable, was the obtaining of the uniform. Yet everything hinged upon it, therefore she must have it.

Finally she took Debby Norris into her confidence, hoping that from her friend's fertile brain might spring some valuable suggestion.

Debby, sympathetic as ever, was enthusiastic for the plan. Its daring appealed to her. " 'Tis the boldest, the best scheme, ever to be imagined," she declared in guarded tones, for none must overhear, "but a British uniform——"

She fell into a brown study, and Reba waited patiently, but presently Debby shook her head decidedly. "Thee can get no help from me, my poor dear. My well of wisdom hath gone bone-dry. But let us go to mother. Hers seldom faileth."

So they went together to consult Mary Norris, where she sat by the western window of the drawing-room, reading. She laid down her book, at the entry of the girls, and prepared herself to listen to whatever they might have to say.

"A scarlet uniform faced with blue," she mused, when the plan and its problem had been laid before her. "Of course, 'tis a British uniform of which thee speaks, and yet, our own General Moylan chose the same for his Continental Dragoons. 'Twas frowned upon by General

Washington, who ordered linen frocks put over them to cover them, and at last said that they must by dyed, lest they cause confusion, they being the very model of those worn by the 21st British Foot."

Reba felt a wild thrill of hope. General Moylan's Dragoons were Pennsylvania men, and the General himself was of Philadelphia, although now with Washington in camp, out on the Skippack Road, some sixteen miles away.

"Oh, Friend Norris, could we get one of these?" she whispered eagerly.

Mary Norris looked dubious. " 'Twould be well nigh as difficult to get it from the one source as from the other. Thee can do nothing in the matter, thyself, Reba, and I am loth to hold out hope, but I promise that I will do my utmost to get the uniform for thee. There are channels open to me, but closed to thee, that I may be able to use, though it must be done with great secrecy, and 'twill take a little time. Come to me at dusk, at the end of two days. If I obtain it, I must give it directly into thy hands. For many reasons, I dare not trust it to a messenger."

Reba left her, buoyed up by Debby's parting words, "Mother hath greater power than most to accomplish what she wills. Hope, then, Reba."

After two slow passing days, Reba walked over to Chestnut Street, wearing the long grey cloak, without which she seldom stirred abroad, now that cool days had come.

Debby's confidence in her mother's powers proved not to be misplaced, for Reba went home, carrying a parcel hidden under the folds of her ample cloak. It contained the coveted uniform, slightly worn, that it might not attract the eye by its too-evident newness. With it, also, was a long, grey, well-used hunting-shirt, which would

serve to disguise the uniform beneath it from Gilbert's companions in imprisonment, until the very instant of his flight had come.

They who loved Gilbert best slept little that night, hoping and fearing, panic-stricken over every possibility that suggested itself which might overthrow Reba's cherished scheme; reminding themselves in turn, of every chance in its favor, and every hope and every fear ended in a prayer to the Lord that He would overrule every obstacle.

Gilbert, meanwhile, had little belief that anything could be done for him. He had spent too many hours, himself, in fruitless cogitations, had rejected too many of his own plans as impracticable, or foolish, or as possessing insurmountable obtacles to success.

It was in this mood that he stood watching for the coming of Reba, on the day after she had received the uniform from Mary Norris.

The accustomed hour passed. The sun declined, and the shadows were growing long, though the light upon the street was still clear. Elbows on the sill, he waited, his heart growing heavier and heavier, for never before had she failed him. He sighed as he scanned the street, empty of her familiar figure, for her brief passing was the one bright spot in his dreary day. What if he should be forced to lack it?

He had completely given her up, when all at once he saw her coming rapidly out of Sixth Street. He would rather she came slowly, that his ray of sunshine might last the longer.

But Reba had no mind to loiter. Raising her eyes, she saw him faithful at his post. She paused only to loosen her bonnet strings, and then came straight to the prison door.

Gilbert's pulses pounded in his head. That sign, that

she had given, meant that the hour for attempted escape was come. In an effort to steady himself to meet it, he remained leaning upon the sill.

Lest his face and manner should betray him, he kept his position unchanged, until Reba had entered. Then he turned, apparently composed, and as if merely to learn the reason for the opening of the door.

Others in the room, befriended by her aunt and herself on the evening after the battle, saluted her as she came in, and went on to Gilbert, who had limped to a shadowy corner, farthest in the room from his fellow prisoners.

There she could best tell him what she had planned, with least chance of being overheard. There they would run no risk of having their faces clearly seen.

Reba spoke rapidly, when she had reached him, for the time was short.

"I have brought thee a uniform, Gilbert, like that of the British officer, who comes here so freely. Thee must put it on, and cover it with the grey hunting-shirt. Be near the door, in the shadows, when the sentries change. Slip off the shirt, and pass out boldly, then, and down the stairs, and command the guard, as though thee had the right, to open the street door. Once thee is free, come not to thy father, but to us, and we will hide thee, till we can get thee forth of the city. Remember to enter by the alley, or all will be lost."

Gilbert looked at her in amazement. "'Tis a bold scheme," he murmured beneath his breath.

"'Tis thy only chance. A good one, if thee can carry the matter through."

She opened her cloak, unfastened a large apron, and disclosed, beneath it, the disguise that she had brought. Casting a swift glance round the room, and seeing that

they were unobserved, she loosed the cord that bound the garments to her. They fell in a heap at her feet, where they were hidden by the dusk.

"Stoop down quickly, now, and put on the coat and waistcoat while I guard thee with my cloak. The hunting-shirt will cover them. Then thee must slip on the small-clothes. The rest thee must add when it is fully dark. Here are cravat and hose, shoes, and cap."

Gilbert made haste to obey, while Reba kept watch, and guard.

"Give me thy worn shirt," she said, and took it beneath her cloak; he with his cheek hot that she should touch so foul a rag.

He had put on the upper garments, and was about to draw on the small-clothes, when she whispered, "Wait. One of the men looks this way."

Stiffened in every muscle by fear of the risk to her, if they should be discovered, he paused.

She forced a low laugh, and made as though they talked on common matters, her vigilant eyes sweeping the room until she was convinced that they were again unwatched.

"Now—swiftly," she murmured, and he drew on the nether garment.

"Wrap all the rest in this apron, and hide them till it is dark. Be near the door, and on the watch for the changing of sentries. Then be bold, Gilbert. Hold thy head down, use some ruse to cover thy face a little as thee passes the guards, but go with a swaggering gait. 'Tis so that the officer moves, as thee knows. Be bold, be swift, and God be with thee. We shall know no peace till thee is come."

The door opened, and the guard beckoned.

"Farewell," she said, and was gone.

Chapter XVI

Gilbert remained where Reba left him, not daring to venture into the stronger light, thick though the twilight had grown, lest his fellow prisoners should take note of his better hunting-shirt, or catch a glimpse of what was concealed beneath, and suspect what was forward.

He sat, as though buried in thought, and seeing him thus, none approached to intrude upon him. His intercourse with them, in the weeks that they had been herded together in this place, had been friendly, but he had formed no intimacy with any of them, and it did not appear strange to them that he sat alone at this time, instead of joining them after Reba had gone. Moreover to their minds, his injured ankle formed a sufficient excuse for his remaining solitary where he was.

But when the twilight deepened into darkness, Gilbert stealthily adjusted the cravat under his chin, hiding it beneath the collar of his hunting-shirt, and replaced his ragged hose and shoes with those Reba had brought. The cap he concealed in the breast of his coat until the moment should come when he must don it. The hunting-shirt had been split down the front, and closed with buttons. Thus, he could easily and quickly discard it when it became necessary.

Gradually, under the favoring darkness, he drew nearer to the door, a yard at a time, with pauses between, as though to rest his foot. For some moments

now, he had been close to the threshold, his ear keyed for the approach of the relieving sentries.

At last he heard them change. The time had come to take the hazard.

He waited only until the footsteps of those departing had died away, and then, with a sharp intake of the breath, and a resolute squaring of his shoulders, he let the hunting-shirt slip to his feet.

Placing the officer's cap on his head, he opened the door, passed through, and closed it behind him.

Except for the sentries on guard, hallway and staircase were deserted.

Head bent, he took a brisk step forward. He had gone a couple of yards beyond them, before the sentries looked higher than his scarlet-clad legs.

Seeing what to them seemed a familiar figure, easily deceived by the swaggering gait and swing of the shoulders of the man descending the stairs, they took it for granted that Captain Smithers had been diverting himself with the prisoners, as usual, and was now on his way to mess.

The prisoners within could have told him better. When the door had opened, and the figure in the scarlet uniform had been for an instant outlined against the light from the hanging lantern in the hall, they had been puzzled. Strong as the resemblance was of that outgoing soldier to Captain Smithers, they were perfectly aware that he had not been among them that afternoon. The uniform, the carriage, the gait looked to be his, yet it was impossible that it could be he.

Who then?

They took a lightning inventory. Westwood was missing. One man found the dropped hunting-shirt near the door; another, the discarded footwear; a third, the apron. The case was clear.

A militiaman from Maryland spoke: "Boys, that's a right smart little Quaker girl, and no mistake. She's been mighty nice to us, and we all owe her somethin'. I reckon we all know how to hold our tongues, and give a man his chance."

There was no dissenting voice, and unhampered by informers, or held up by suspicious sentries, Gilbert reached the door to the street. In a voice as near like Captain Smithers' as he could feign, he gave the order to open it.

The guard there, new to his duty, and meticulous in observance of it, looked him over from head to foot. He did not know Captain Smithers, nor his ways.

Quailing inwardly, but outwardly preserving an unaltered demeanor, Gilbert repeated his command.

Satisfied, then by the uniform, and by the air of authority of the man before him, that he had a right to pass, the guard threw open the door, with the respect due to an officer, and Gilbert crossed the threshold with a firm, unhurried step.

The sound of the closing door told him that he was free. He drew a deep breath of the good air, to which he had long been a stranger. He was free, but for how long? At any instant his escape might be discovered, and there would be pursuit, and perhaps recapture. He dared not show haste, however, until he had gotten well out of sight of the prison, nor enough at any time, to excite suspicion.

He crossed the street, and kept close to the house walls, trusting to the black and starless night, to cover him from too observant eyes. Quickening his steps as much as he dared, he kept his officer's cap well down upon his forehead.

Still maintaining his assumption of cool nonchalance,

he made his way along Sixth Street, and into High Street, the overhanging trees favoring him, by the shelter that their dense shadows afforded.

Approaching the Stanhope dwelling from this unfrequented end of High Street, his hopes rose steadily, for he had been unpursued.

As he neared his own home, he saw the cheerful candlelight streaming from its front windows. He cast a hungry glance within, when he had reached it. His old father, his head buried in his hands, sat in his armchair by the hearth, a lonely figure, thinking of him, praying for him, perhaps, at this moment, while his son, looking through the pane, longed to enter in, yet dared not.

Out of the Stanhope house issued boisterous laughter from gaming officers, and there was clink of glasses, before they were lifted to moisten dry throats.

The black mouth of the alley yawned before him. He slipped into it, and leaned, for an instant, against its damp brick wall, to recover himself, and take thought.

How should he reach his friends unseen?

If he should cross the garden, to enter by the door on the piazza, he must pass the kitchen, where doubtless the maids were at work. These, by some exclamation of surprise, at his sudden appearance, or by some indiscreet remark, might unintentionally betray him into the clutches of the British officers billeted in the house.

His deliberations were cut short. Out of the impenetrable gloom came Reba's low voice.

"Thank God thee is come. Now, if I can but get thee hidden, without discovery, thee is safe for the time. But once more I must disguise thee."

"Do as thee wills," murmured Westwood, "I leave all to thee."

Reba handed him a bonnet and cloak. He wrapped

the long cloak about him, covered his head with the deep bonnet, and with Reba guiding, he slipped through the gate into the garden, and across a little stretch of grass to the open cellar door, which was out of range of observation from the kitchen.

They went down the steps, and at Reba's bidding, her companion lowered the door softly into place, leaving them in such darkness, that they could not see an inch before them.

Reba stooped, and groping, found and lifted a heavy sack, that covered a lighted lantern, standing on the cellar floor, at the foot of the steps.

"Thee must hide," she told him, "till the household sleeps, or longer if need be. It will not do to try to get thee forth of the city while they may be making search for thee. In the house, there would be too great hazard, and here there is no place where thee could lie unsuspected, except in that wherein thee was used to hide from me, in our childhood."

"The great hogshead?" queried Gilbert.

"Yes," answered Reba.

Grave though the moment was, and much as time pressed, a smile passed between them, remembering how often they had played their childish game of hide and seek in the vast cellar.

In a corner of it, raised a foot and a half from the floor, upon a huge block of wood, stood a monster hogshead on end. Into it the autumn pressing of cider would soon be strained. There it would stand, an enormous reservoir, from which the clear amber liquid would be run off into kegs for winter use.

Gilbert handed Reba the cloak and hood, mounted the hogshead with his old-time agility, and lowered himself into it, out of sight.

"Thee must fasten down the lid," he said to her. "There will be no safety else, if they should come to search."

"How will thee breathe then?" she murmured in dismay.

"The bunghole will serve," he answered. "Have no fear, Reba. Press the boards well down."

She hesitated. "How then shall I get food to thee, at need, Gilbert?"

"Through the bunghole, also. In any case, I have learned to fast."

She could not see the grim smile that accompanied his last words. She took the boards that formed the lid, and with strong young hands fitted them carefully to place, and pressed them down.

"When the maids sleep, I will come with food," she promised, and heard Gilbert's voice, hollow from within, bid her to run no risk.

Hanging the discarded cloak and bonnet over her arm, she set down the cellar lantern upon the floor, at the foot of the steps, extinguished it, and felt her way upward. Elevating the door a tiny crack, she peeped into the garden. It was empty. She raised the door higher, and went out.

Adjusting her cloak to conceal what she carried beneath it, she crossed the grass plat, and passed through the piazza door into the little sitting room.

Hannah Stanhope, knitting rapidly and mechanically, looked up, as she entered, and darted her a glance of inquiry.

Reba dropped cape and bonnet on a chair, sank down beside her aunt, and laid her head upon her shoulder.

Hannah stroked her bright hair. "My dear little maid," she whispered. "My dear brave maid."

"'Tis but the beginning of hazards," sighed Reba, "and we must act as quickly as we dare, for every instant adds to his danger. He must be out of the city, and past the sentries and outposts, before morning."

"Yea, I know that; but I have the pass, and my cloak, and bonnet, and skirt, over the uniform, will suffice to shield him, till he has safely passed the boundary. Once the maids are in bed, we will send him forth. Meanwhile he is safe. Take thy knitting," she counseled presently. "It will steady thee."

But though the prisoners in the Provost were as one man in their resolve to give their late comrade in arms time to make good his escape, and his absence was not discovered by the jailer until he made his morning rounds, a pair of sharp eyes had observed Gilbert Westwood as he plunged into the darkness of the covered alley.

Poll, in from Lancaster, and idling about the street to pick up news and congenial companionship, after her usual custom, was perched on a doorstep, across the way from the Stanhope house, looking toward the windows, through which she could see the group of officers at cards.

Her bold eyes followed every movement of Captain Barker and his companions avidly. Instead of being perched solitary upon a doorstep, it would have delighted her to be inside the brightly lighted room, where the redcoats were unsparing of the candles, exchanging sallies with the men, and watching the progress of the play at close hand.

She was debating whether to go and tap upon the windowpane, when her eyes were caught by an officer in the uniform of the 21st British Foot, coming down the street.

Determined on sociability, she waited, ready to call

out a saucy greeting as he went by, but instead of giving her this opportunity, he crossed the street, entered the Stanhope alley, and was swallowed up in its black maw.

She thought he was on his way to the kitchen premises, and watched for the opening of the alley gate. Some moments passed, however, before this occurred, and when it did, only a tall Quakeress, cloaked and bonneted, accompanied by a Quaker girl, passed through.

Poll got to her feet instantly, crossed the street, and peered into the alley. Now that the gate was closed, the alley was dark as a pocket, and she could see nothing. Venturing in, she traversed its length, her hands extended on either side touching the walls as she went.

It was empty.

What, then, had become of the scarlet-clad officer? Poll wagged her head suspiciously. There was more here than met the casual eye. The smaller figure had been Reba's. Even the faint light, that the opening of the gate had given, had enabled Poll to see that. The other figure she might have taken for Hannah's, except for the vanished officer.

These British diverted themselves oddly at times. If the taller figure were the officer, his identity suddenly concealed under the disguise of cloak and bonnet, what might that mean? The patriot sympathies of the Stanhopes were known. What, then, would Reba have to do with a British officer?

Poll bethought herself. Could this officer be a spy, and his uniform but a disguise? Had he come to receive intelligence from the Stanhopes, or to be aided by them in some way?

These were not questions to which she could find an answer, but she knew one who could, and it would mean silver to herself, in case her news proved to be of value.

Without wasting time in further cogitation, she set out at once to search for Richard Skinner.

At this hour of evening he was sometimes taking a quiet glass of sherry at the Indian Queen. She would go there first.

Putting her head in at the door, she saw him, as she had hoped, at his usual table in a corner, sipping his sherry without haste, or unseemly display of enjoyment. There was no need to approach him. She had only to saunter in, cross his vision, and depart. He would understand that she had something of importance to communicate, and would come.

Shortly after, in the privacy of his warehouse, she was narrating to him what she had seen.

Richard Skinner received her intelligence non-committally. "It shall be looked into," he said, when she had finished, "and if I find that thee has brought me anything of value, thee shall be paid."

Poll showed a sulky face. "Here have I come," she grumbled, "to bring word of as odd a happening as any one need wish for, and not a penny I am to get by it until it is looked into first."

"Not every odd happening is worth paying for, Poll," smiled Richard Skinner, unmoved by her ill-humor. "Take this silver shilling, and the promise of another to match it, if thy news proves worth it."

In his own mind, however, he had so little doubt of its value that, Poll dismissed, and his warehouse made fast, he took himself straight away to Mr. Joseph Galloway, now made Commissioner of Police by General Howe, as well as Commissioner of the Port, and told the story, and he in turn gave certain orders, to be carried out forthwith.

While Captain Barker still sat at play with his friends, a British sergeant, accompanied by a couple of common soldiers, arrived at the Stanhope front door, was challenged by the orderly, was taken to the Captain, and having made his business known, appeared suddenly in the room where Hannah Stanhope and Reba awaited the moment when all except themselves should be abed.

"This house is under suspicion, madam," he bawled. "I've orders to search it."

A ghastly white overspread Reba's cheek. Clutching her knitting needles, though their movement ceased, she barely managed to keep back an outcry.

Hannah Stanhope laid her partly finished stocking upon the table, and rose composedly. "Go wherever thee wills," she replied. "Our house is open to thee."

Her aunt's presence of mind brought Reba to a realization that neither by look, word, or act, must she confirm suspicion, nor imperil him they loved.

Standing out of the way of the soldiers, Quaker woman and Quaker maid looked on with apparent unconcern, while the redcoats, in their search, threw the room into confusion, pried into cupboards, and rapped the walls viciously with their musket butts, in the hope of discovering some secret panel that might conceal a man behind it.

Having exhausted every possibility in that room, the sergeant, before commencing search in the rest of the house, gave a curt order to one of his men. "Watch these women, that they don't stir from where they are. We'll have no slips, no warnings, no escapes."

Knowing that Gilbert was as well hidden as she had had power to compass, fully alive to the paramount necessity of allaying suspicion, Reba sank down upon the

nearest chair, and fell to knitting feverishly upon her stocking. Friend Stanhope did the same, though with less speed.

They did not cease, or stir, while the sergeant, and his remaining man, went through the house, with the same thoroughness that they had already displayed.

Penetrating to the kitchen, the search party found it occupied only by Phoebe and Dorcas, the former dissolved in tears, the other with her turbaned head held aggressively, the stiffly starched and many colored folds of her bandanna fairly bristling with sullen contempt, and dumb fury.

To Reba, and to Hannah, it seemed an eternity before the men returned.

Fruitless though the search had been thus far, the sergeant had not given up hope, for the cellar was still to be inspected, and if the man was there, he was entrapped, for the sergeant had stationed a third soldier at the back of the house, to prevent exit from that quarter.

"Light me to the cellar, mistress," he jerked out authoritatively, looking in upon Friend Stanhope from the passage.

Hannah, ignoring the insolence of his manner, picked up a candle, and prepared to go before him, but Reba, who could no longer bear inaction coupled with suspense, hoping, also, that she might be able to divert the officer from a too narrow inspection of Gilbert's hiding-place, sprang up, and took the candle from her.

"Nay, aunt, thee knows that thee should not adventure the cellar steps by night," she protested. "Thy eyes betray thee. Let me."

Hannah yielded. "My niece will light thee, sir," she said.

"One does as well as another," grunted the sergeant shortly. The unruffled demeanor of the Quakeress began to make him wonder whether he had not been sent upon a fool's errand. Nevertheless, he would overlook no possible hiding-place, especially one so likely as a cellar.

Reba went before him, holding the lighted candle high, and steadying herself for the ordeal. Throwing open the door that led from the passage to the cellar, she paused.

"Have a care, sir," she called over her shoulder, as if to warn the sergeant, her clear contralto voice lifted, that it might penetrate to Gilbert where he lay. "The cellar steps are steep, and one falls easily."

She preceded them down the stair, the flickering candle casting an uncertain light in the vast, dark, underground chamber.

"Where would thee have me stand, while thee searches?" she inquired, her words coming distinctly to Gilbert's ears.

"In the centre, girl, and spare your talk."

Reba took position, holding the candle elevated in a hand stiffened by a sheer effort of the will. Her veins ran ice, but by no outward sign did she betray the sickening fear for Gilbert that possessed her.

"Be thorough now," barked the sergeant to his men, and the final hunt began.

Peering into vegetable bins, prodding piles of empty sacks, casting searching eyes into every nook and corner that might secrete the most diminutive of mankind, they minutely inspected the cellar from end to end. The cavern of the yawning chimney was investigated, and Reba was summoned to cast the rays of the candle up its sooty mouth, that the sergeant might assure himself that no one was finding lodgment there.

The great cider hogshead was left until the last, and this purposely, for the sergeant knew that escape from it would be impossible without immediate discovery, and that capture would be certain.

Reba sensed his object in an apparent slighting of it, and her heart died in her bosom, when at length he stepped up to it.

"A likely hiding-place this," he commented, casting a sourly suspicious grin at Reba. "We'll have a look inside."

She made no answer, but held the candle higher, as if by means of the tiny flickering flame that rose from its tip she reached up to a strength and power beyond herself, to draw down help at this crucial time.

The sergeant stepped upon the block, thinking to look down into an open cask. He scowled when he found himself confronted by the securely fastened lid. He drew his sword, and struck the staves of the hogshead sharply with the handle.

The hogshead gave forth a hollow sound.

In a voice that she tried to keep steady, Reba volunteered, " 'Tis but our empty cider tun, ready to receive the autumn pressing. The lid keeps out cobwebs and dust meanwhile."

His forehead corrugated in a heavy frown, the sergeant stood considering. The hogshead had rung hollow. There was thick dust upon the top. Should he give over the search without raising the lid? He had half decided to do so, but swung back suddenly to his first resolve.

"Fetch me a hatchet, girl. We'll have off this lid."

His words tore from Reba her last hope. All was lost. Her prayers had been in vain. Disobey she dared not.

As one groping in a hideous dream, she went to where a hatchet lay, picked it up, and came with it on leaden

The hogshead gave forth a hollow sound.

feet to where the sergeant waited. To her own peril, when it became known that she had hidden a so-called rebel to the Crown, she gave no thought. Her whole soul went up in a last agonized prayer for Gilbert in his extremity of danger.

The sergeant scrutinized her face sharply as he took the hatchet from her. He saw that she was pale, but, as by a miracle, nothing else in her behavior gave clue to the terror that consumed her.

"Perhaps you'd like to pry the lid yourself," he jibed cruelly, determined to test her out.

"'Twill take a man's strength," she answered, her tones even, almost indifferent, for the supreme trial of her self-command had come, the supreme moment for Gilbert had arrived. If she failed now, all was indeed lost.

The sergeant laughed, and shot a significant glance at the soldier leaning, musket in hand, against a neighboring bin.

"Hold the candle near," he commanded, and Reba obeyed.

Setting the thin blade of the hatchet in position, he was about to pry up one of the boards of the lid, when the close proximity of the candle revealed to him what the dusk had hidden before.

Across the top of the tun, reaching from side to side of it, was a silvery cobweb, woven by an industrious spider after the lid had been fastened down.

The sergeant paused. The cask had rung hollow to his sword-blow. Here was a spider's web across the dusty boards.

He gave the hogshead a kick, descended from the block, and threw down the hatchet. "The web on yon lid, girl, makes me believe what your words could not,"

he vouchsafed. "No use wasting time on an empty cask."

At a double-quick he marched toward the stair, and up it, the private following.

In relief and gratitude to the overruling Power that had saved Gilbert, with her steps tottering a little in her reaction from the strain that she had undergone, Reba lighted the way upward.

The clock in the hall had struck two when she ventured again into the cellar, and raised the lid of the hogshead.

"'Tis time to go, Gilbert," she whispered cautiously. "All sleep, except Aunt Hannah and I. I have brought thee these garments, and this pass. Thee must feign thyself a woman as best thee can."

He climbed out, and she helped him to adjust the voluminous skirt that she offered him. She folded a small woolen shoulder shawl, and arranged it like a broad kerchief around his neck, pinning it snugly across his chest. The cloak came next, to cover him with its thick folds to his very ankles.

She did all in silence, he looking down upon her bent head meanwhile, the light of the lantern touching her curling locks to living gold, and deepening the soft pallor of her cheek to creamy white.

Lovely she was to him, always; pure-hearted and true; and sweeter than any other. Today, tonight, she was his deliverer, opening doors to him, standing between him and discovery, and making ways for him to freedom. Reverence was in his deep eyes, gratitude and admiring love in his heart.

Unconscious of what was passing within him, she gave him the bonnet. Before he took it, he laid his hands upon her slender shoulders, and tried to speak, but his feeling was too intense for words.

He looked into her face, and was comforted, seeing that she understood what he would say.

"In the pocket of the skirt is food," she murmured, "and a purse. Thy father hath filled it. He bids me give his love and blessing, and so doth Aunt Hannah. Haste thee now, dear Gilbert. Thee must reach and pass the pickets before dawn. Send word, if thee can, that thee went safely. Our hearts will ache with fear for thee, until it comes."

He promised. They went together to the steps that led to the garden.

"My prayers go with thee," whispered Reba.

"And mine remain with thee," he answered low.

He ascended the steps, pushed open the slanting door, and went out into the garden.

Reba, poised upon the narrow steps, settled the door soundlessly into its place.

Chapter XVII

Crooked between harvested fields and woods in a glory of autumn foliage, the Skippack Road was beginning to be touched by the morning sun. A quarter of an hour more, and its rays would kindle a blaze of color among the red and yellow leaves of maple and birch, and strike noble harmonies from the soberer tones of oak and hickory. Frost had browned the hazel thickets, blue October haze was in the hollows, and over the landscape arched the blue October sky.

Sixteen miles beyond Germantown, on this road, General Washington's army lay encamped. Between it and Philadelphia, now held by the British, was neutral ground, patroled by lighthorsemen from both sides. To enter it, or to leave it, one must give reasons, and show a pass. One crossed it at a hazard.

Except for a tall Quakeress going afoot, in the direction of the Continental camp, the Skippack Road was for the time being deserted.

The woman was of a powerful build, yet her feet, as she moved, showed a plodding weariness, as though she had already traveled far. Nevertheless, she seemed to urge herself forward, as though eager to reach a given destination as soon as possible. If that were the Continental camp, five miles still stretched ahead of her.

As she neared a bend in the road, hoof-beats were heard approaching her. Looking for no molestation from that direction, the Quakeress went straight forward, and round the bend. From under her bonnet brim, which ef-

fectually concealed her features, she saw a trooper, evidently a Colonial lighthorseman, coming toward her at a rapid trot.

Her confidence fully established, she beheld him reach and pass her, without the slightest uneasiness.

A rod beyond her, however, the trooper stopped, whirled his black mare about, and came to drawn rein alongside of her.

"Whither bound?" he demanded.

"Skippack Way," was the reply, muffled by the bonnet. Evidently the Quakeress meant not to be communicative to a trooper, though a friendly one.

"Skippack Road leads Skippack Way," laughed the trooper, sententiously. "You'll have to give more news of yourself than that comes to, for Quaker woman though you look, your feet are over big for a woman, and your shoes were never made for women's wear. Quaker cloak and bonnet may cover a British spy." He leveled a pistol at the Quakeress as he spoke, and held his finger threateningly upon the trigger.

To his surprise, the Quakeress pushed back her bonnet without hesitation, and showed a man's face. " 'Tis as thee says, friend. I am no woman. Neither am I British spy. I am Gilbert Westwood, Free Quaker, soldier in the Pennsylvania militia, and escaped this night from Philadelphia, where I was held prisoner after the battle at Germantown."

"A well-sounding tale," returned the trooper skeptically. "It might go down, except that I caught a glimpse of scarlet uniform a moment since, where your shawl's gone awry under your grey cloak."

"That, too, I can explain," said Gilbert, boldly throwing back cloak and shawl. " 'Tis the red and blue uniform of General Moylan's brigade, got me by a friend,

that I might be taken for an officer of the 21st British Foot, and thus escape from prison."

"Fol-de-rol," scoffed the trooper. "British Foot, General Moylan's men, and then a Quaker dress besides! You take me for a fool. A cursed British spy you are, and not one step farther do you carry those great feet of yours Skippack Way."

"I am no spy, but as true a patriot as thyself," protested Gilbert, his cheek hot at the accusation, though he could not but own to himself that the trooper had some warrant for it. "Take me as prisoner to the camp, if thee wills, and there discover from my captain whether I speak truth or no."

"You're Quaker, that's plain enough, but our General Washington's had cause to distrust your like, particularly those from Philadelphia. You go no nearer camp than here."

Unwilling to parley further, Gilbert pulled his grey cloak together, and stepped forward.

It infuriated the trooper. "Halt," he shouted fiercely, "or I'll shoot you down!"

Gilbert turned his head, and without obeying, called his reply. "I have told thee what thee can do to prove my truth. I go to join my regiment, and my duty admits of no tarrying on the highways."

Angered still more at this flaunting of his authority, believing not a word of what had been told him, the trooper lost his head. Pointing his pistol at Gilbert's retreating figure, he took aim, and fired.

The hand that held the weapon was less steady than usual, and the bullet struck lower than the trooper had intended. It wrought disaster, nevertheless. With a piercing cry, Gilbert fell in a crumpled heap by the roadside.

The trooper seeing him prostrate in the dust, con-

cerned himself no further. His sense of his own importance was appeased, the impudent progress of an impostor had been checked. Let him lie there, let him die there. "One spy the less," he thought, "and so much the better."

Gilbert, sinking rapidly into unconsciousness, heard but faintly the pounding of the black mare's feet upon the highroad, taking the way toward Philadelphia.

Leaving dying behind him one whom he had obstinately convinced himself was an enemy, the trooper was, without knowing it, galloping toward a meeting with an old acquaintance.

Poll, disappointed and scowling, because neither frolic, nor more than a single coin had been her portion on this trip to the city, was skulking among the hazel bushes that bordered the road. After she had left Richard Skinner the evening before, she had returned to her post of observation before the Stanhope dwelling, in expectation of interesting developments of some sort before the night was spent.

She had been vastly disgruntled, however, when, having seen the sergeant and his men enter the house, she beheld them depart after what had evidently been a vain search. From this, she had been forced to the conclusion that the officer, metamorphosed into a Quakeress in the darkness of the alley, had transacted promptly whatever business he had come upon, and gotten himself safely away again during her absence. Therefore she could hope for no further compensation, at present, from Richard Skinner.

It was high time, too, that she should get back to Lancaster, for Friend Christopher Marshall's patience had long since worn thin under her incessant waywardness, and vagrant wanderings. Still, she was determined

to make one more effort at obtaining remunerative information, before she turned her face homeward.

Her most likely opportunity, she argued, was in the direction of Washington's camp, hence she was now threading her way along the edge of the Skippack Road. From behind the screen of bushes and low growth that bordered it, she could observe unseen those who traveled that way.

By methods best known to herself, she had wormed herself out of the city, had eluded the last picket, had walked fast and far, and now, having refreshed herself by a nap on pine needles, was ready for whatever might offer.

She pricked her ears when she heard the tramp of a horse, and her eyes snapped with delight, when peeping through the branches, she saw riding toward her the self-same trooper with whom she had struck acquaintance last July.

Agile as a cat she sprang from the hazel copse, and into the road, her arms akimbo, and raised an impudent face to him.

"Ho, baggage," he shouted, pulling up his horse abruptly. "You here?"

"Poll's here," she giggled. "'Look for me on the roads,' I said, when last I saw you."

The trooper, being on patrol, surveyed the highway before and behind, to make sure that none observed him, but it was vacant.

"Where've you kept hid since last July?" he demanded jovially.

Poll shrugged a shoulder provokingly. "Here and there," she said. "And you?"

"Here and there," he mimicked, "like yourself, but on bigger business."

"At Elk, and Brandywine, and Germantown," guessed Poll.

"Right, wench."

"And beaten by the redcoats everywhere," taunted she.

The trooper drew himself higher in the saddle, and flashed a martial eye at her. "In the big fights, yes. But how we harried 'em, and kept 'em back, along the roads, and cut 'em off from forage. They landed at Elk to find every field, and barn, and grist mill cleaned out. Not a wagon nor a horse left to 'em. Bare as your hand everywhere. It took 'em five weeks and more to march fifty miles, we made it that hot for 'em. There's more than battles, wench, to war," he ended condescendingly.

"Yes," agreed Poll glibly. "Bare feet, and hungry stomachs, and rags besides."

"And no pay," gloomed the trooper, veered to the other side of the picture by her words. "Jingo," he ejaculated, slapping his thigh, for a sudden thought had struck him. "I've been a fool. Six miles, or thereabouts, back yonder, lies as good a pair of shoes as man could want, stuck on the feet of the spy I shot this morning."

"A spy," squealed Poll, agog with curiosity.

"A spy," reiterated he. "Got up for all the world like a Quaker woman, in bonnet and cloak, and underneath those a British uniform. He put up a story of escape from the Provost, and being a Fighting Quaker, and a patriot, but he didn't fool Jim Oviatt. 'One spy the less,' says I, and shot him down. A patriot soldier in British uniform, topped by a Quaker woman's dress! Ho, ho! A likely story!"

Poll was never slow in putting two and two together. Red-coated officer and Quakeress in the alley on High Street of the night before, became the man shot down a little while ago upon Skippack Road.

"His name?" she inquired eagerly, "or did he give you none?"

"Gilbert Westwing?—Westmore?" ruminated the trooper, his finger to his eyebrow, "No, not exactly, but 'tis no matter."

"Westwood, maybe?" suggested Poll.

" 'Twas that he called himself," returned the trooper instantly.

"I think he spoke you true," she said, and told him why.

A loud whistle of consternation issued from the trooper's lips. "Here's mischief, if I've shot a patriot down!"

"One patriot the less," mocked Poll. " 'Tis little matter."

"Oho, a Tory, you!" shouted the trooper, his suspicions awake.

"A Tory. Well, and what of that? A Tory fares better than a rebel. Bare feet, hungry belly, no pay, and rags besides, that's what your rebel gets. A Tory goes well fed, well covered, and rattles gold in his pockets. Could do the like, if you would. Could do the like at any time. Howe's men want nothing. The more fool you, to be a rebel, when you might be a Tory."

"Out upon you, for a good-for-nothing baggage," roared the trooper indignantly, gripping his bridle-rein. "Clear the road, or I'll ride you down."

Poll jumped aside, and wagged her red tongue at him. "Trot back, and get the Quaker rebel's shoes, Barefeet, and when you've worn those through, look for Poll. She knows where gold's to be had for rebels who'll turn Tory."

She vanished among the bushes before he could frame

a retort, and when he bent over his horse's back, to pierce the screening thicket, not a moving or a rustling leaf betrayed her covert.

Much though he resented her outrageous suggestion that he should turn Tory, he could not but yield to his own idea that a pair of stout shoes was not to be despised. He had given the patriot a disabling, if not a fatal wound. The fellow must have been bleeding like a fountain, where he left him; might be dead by now. If death had come, the trooper would hold his peace, and take the shoes. On the other hand, if Westwood were not dead, he would carry him into camp, where his wound could be dressed. That would go far toward purchasing leniency toward himself, for ignoring the wounded man's request that his identity be verified, and for his own hasty act.

He put spurs to his horse, and went at a gallop to the spot where he had left him. But he found only dried blood to mark it; and except this, although he followed the highroad to where the first sentry was stationed outside the encampment, he saw no sign of the man whom he had shot down.

To question the sentry might be unwise; and he turned his horse's head away again from camp.

"One patriot the less, 'tis little matter," Poll had said.

He had resented it at the time, but when he considered that dead men tell no tales, the trooper felt inclined to believe that one patriot the less, in this instance, would have been the better for himself, and as he rode along, he cursed himself, that by a foolish oversight, he had neglected to possess himself of the wounded man's excellent pair of shoes.

It provoked him the more, later in the morning, when

in the neutral ground, to hear a voice bawling derisively out at him from some hiding-place among the thickets, "Didst get the shoes, Barefeet?"

Knowing the voice for Poll's, the trooper, without a turn of the head, spat out a round oath along with his answer, "'Twould take a Tory minx to rob a patriot of his shoes." Then he went on, leaving Poll in as much uncertainty as himself as to whether or no Gilbert Westwood lived.

Chapter XVIII

Sunrise, that had seen Gilbert shot to earth, found Reba still broad awake after sleepless hours of following him in her thoughts, through dark city streets, past sentries at the boundary, beyond the farthest stationed picket, if he were fortunate, along country roads lined by farms and forests, getting nearer every moment, she hoped, to friendly sentries, and reaching, at last, the encampment on the Skippack Road, and his regiment.

Trembling hope alternated in her heart with chill fear. Chances innumerable there were that some enemy sentry would pierce his disguise, that he would be recaptured, or taken for a spy, perhaps, and killed. Should misfortune overtake him, weeks, or even months, might intervene before she learned of it. It might be that those who loved him would never learn his fate at all. Realizing this possibility, Reba buried her face in her pillow, her hands pressed hard against her lips, lest she should sob aloud.

If he went safely, word would come of it by some channel, she did not doubt. No matter what the event, however, it would be cruelly hard to wait.

Day brought its duties, and she rose to meet them, pale, weary, starting painfully at every sound. The more than usual disorder, after an evening of hilarity, prevailing in the rooms occupied by the British officers, vexed and disgusted her excessively.

Her Aunt Hannah, heavy-eyed, and white of cheek

like herself, returned from market with an empty basket. The British had been on the spot precisely at the opening hour, and had bought up every particle of produce displayed, leaving the inhabitants unprovided-for. Some days before, a proclamation of General Howe's had been read in the market-place, announcing that henceforth no Continental money was to be received in change or in payment for any commodity. Only hard money, or old Pennsylvania bills, would be allowed to circulate.

Hannah was gravely concerned over this proclamation. Richard Skinner's refusal to pay over to her in gold the legitimate profits due to Reba and herself was about to work severe hardship for them both.

There were many things that they could contrive to do without; but provisions they must have, and they now had four extra mouths to feed besides their own household; mouths of enemies, who as long as their appetites were satisfied, were completely indifferent as to whether the womenfolk, in the house they were dominating, were fed or not.

"We must have everything possible brought in to us from Broadlands by Jabez Foster," she said to Reba, setting down her empty basket wearily, and untying her bonnet-strings. "He hath a regular market pass, and I must get word to him to supply us on every market-day. It will save us laying out ready money, and will ensure provisions. Otherwise we should fall sadly short. And there is this: every half-jo, or shilling, or penny, that we spend now, will carry our hard money out of the country into Great Britain, and that will impoverish our bleeding Colonies yet more."

"Then we shall not spend a single half-penny that we can help," responded Reba. "If only the British are driven from our shores, I can cheerfully do without

whatever I must; and I know that with thee 'tis the same."

"Fortunately, we have our winter's wood laid in," reflected her aunt, beginning to run over household possibilities. "Tomorrow thee can ride to Broadlands, and tell Jabez to send in the cider at once, and some fresh eggs. The root vegetables and fruit can come in another week. Until then, we will manage with what we have in pantry and cellar."

But the British had other plans for the stores that were in the larders and cellars of Philadelphia's citizens.

About ten of the clock, when aunt and niece were preparing to settle themselves with their sewing, the tramp of soldiers was heard in the alley, and before either of them could go to learn the cause, Dorcas burst into the room, her eyes bulging with excitement.

"De's come to git ev'y stick o' wood, Fren' Stanhope," she exclaimed. "Dey's marched right down to de woodshed, an' 'mencin' to kyar it out. How I'se gwine cook you all's dinnah widout no wood?"

Hannah Stanhope laid down her sewing. "I will see what can be done, Dorcas," she replied. "Surely they will not leave us altogether without fuel."

The report brought by Dorcas was only too well founded. Eight men, commanded by a corporal, were industriously at work upon the woodpiles. Logs of oak, and hickory, birch sticks, pine knots, were being conveyed in huge armloads to a wagon standing before the front door.

"Friend," said Hannah Stanhope, going to the corporal, who stood in the middle of the cellar, making a list of whatever food supplies were there, "thy men are making very free with my wood."

"General's orders, mistress," answered the corporal,

not disrespectfully, but with firmness, "Wood to be commandeered wherever found. Wood, and anything else our men can use."

"And how doth thy general expect that our houses are to be warmed, and our households fed, if we are deprived of our wood, and our provisions?" inquired Hannah, a glint of indignation in her eyes.

"Not questions for my answering, mistress," returned the corporal, though his air was apologetic, "Orders is orders, and my men and I have got to obey 'em."

"'Tis an outrageous authority that deprives unprotected women of their homes, and of their substance," declared the Quakeress sternly. "Four British soldiers are quartered in my house, occupying the best rooms, rudely disregarding the presence in it, and the needs of my niece and myself. They clamor for the best food, and insist upon having it. Ruin and confusion follow their footsteps. We have been shoved into the back of our own home, on sufferance in it, where of right we are mistresses. Now, it seems, we are to be deprived of warmth and food, also. In such case, and with markets bought up by thy general's soldiery, how are we to be expected to feed and house his officers and men, when we can no longer feed ourselves?"

The young corporal, having a sense of justice, flushed to the roots of his hair, for the truth of what she had said was obvious. But he could not help the situation, and merely repeated, "We are under orders, mistress."

Hannah Stanhope, standing at his elbow, saw two kegs of cider, a sack of potatoes, one of onions, a firkin of butter, a large cheese, and a dozen heads of fine cabbage, piled together to be carried away in a second wagon, drawn up behind the one which was receiving the wood.

Reba, come to look on, angrily, held her tongue in check with difficulty.

In the background, Dorcas watched the carrying away of all her working materials, in a state bordering on petrifaction.

When the last remnant of household stores had been carried from the cellar into the street, Hannah Stanhope turned to her dark-skinned handmaid, and said in a tone audible to the corporal, "Hereafter, Dorcas, no matter what we have in the house, thee will prepare no meals for the officers and their servants."

For sole answer, Dorcas threw up her hands to heaven, and vanished. She had no care for the redcoats. They might starve for all of her. But her adored mistress, and her beloved "Miss Reba," how was she to endure to see them deprived of fitting sustenance?

On her return to the kitchen, she relieved her feelings by railing at Phoebe, who cowered over the hearth, her apron well drawn over her ears.

"Tek dat apurn off'en yo haid, yo' lil white dunce, lessen I smack yo' eahs. Come in dis pantry, an' hep me hide some o' dese yere purvisions, befoh dem redcoated debbils done snatch de very day's dinnah outen yo' mistisses moufs."

But Phoebe was deaf and blind to everything except fear. Two descents upon the house by parties of soldiery, within twenty-four hours, had deprived her of power to respond to the angry injunctions of Dorcas.

Seeing that she was to receive no aid from the spineless creature by the hearth, the outraged cook, sniffing at her contemptuously, hustled together the food from the pantry shelves, tucked it into the brick oven at the side of the fireplace, and setting her back against the

door of it, stood with arms folded, as though daring any living man to budge her from the spot.

The corporal and his men departed, however, without invading the kitchen, and her fears relieved on the score of the dinner, Dorcas bustled into the quarters of the officers, and swept away, in their absence, every particle of wood from the baskets by the hearths, and lugged them away into hiding.

Loud were the exclamations of disgust and wrath from Captain Barker, when he returned to find neither fire nor food awaiting himself and his men.

"Thee may complain to thy general," replied Hannah Stanhope indifferently, where he had stormed in upon her. "Thee must perceive that it lieth altogether at his door. Excuse me, Captain Barker, but I must at least have my privacy. Thee has thy quarters. Pray remain in them, and leave my niece and me undisturbed in that portion of our house that remains to us."

Thus repulsed, Captain Barker stamped out of the house and down the street, his men at his heels, to fill their hungry stomachs at their own expense at the Purple and Blue Tavern, favorite resort of the military.

Chapter XIX

FEARS for Gilbert gnawing at her heart, Reba took the familiar road to Broadlands on the following morning. Juno needed no guiding. Many a time in the past, with Gilbert in the saddle, the good mare had trotted along Gray's Lane to eat her oats in Broadlands' stable, while her master plucked early cherries with Reba, or rowed on the river in summer, or gathered late grapes and peaches, as the seasons rolled around.

The raid upon cellar and woodpiles on the preceding day made Reba's journey doubly necessary. Prompt replenishing of household supplies could not be accomplished any other way, with all of Philadelphia's provisions greedily snapped up by the enemy.

The British still had before them the problem of opening the harbor, guarded by Fort Mifflin and Fort Mercer, the fortifications at Red Bank, and the works at Billingsport. The capture of the frigate *Delaware,* through the offices of Richard Skinner, had enabled the enemy to command the ferry to Jersey, and to interrupt supplies to the Continental forts from Trenton, as they had hoped. This gave them no mean advantage, but their fleet of three hundred sail, laden with abundant military supplies, still lay outside the harbor, and below the forts, in spite of persistent efforts on the part of the British to open the port.

General Washington had commanded those in charge of the fortifications to hold them to the last, hoping to

make the British position untenable, and thus compel evacuation of the city.

To leave a place that promised him comfortable and agreeable winter quarters was contrary to the wishes of Sir William Howe, who was leaving to Captain John Montressor, his chief engineer, and to Lord Cornwallis, the business of conquering the obstructions to the entrance of the fleet, while he remained at his ease, delightfully housed at Stenton, an elegant mansion in Germantown.

It was the expectation of the British that the harbor would open to them at almost any hour, and in the meantime, they continued to take from the mouths of the helpless inhabitants to fill their own. This was the way of war.

As Reba pursued Gray's Lane, she encountered, at intervals, small parties of foragers, with sacks of meal, bags of apples, onions, and potatoes, thrown over their horses' backs, or with fresh vegetables, ducks, geese, and chickens, dangling from their saddle-bows, rifled, as she readily guessed, from some adjacent kitchen-garden or farm.

It alarmed her for the fate of Broadlands, and she urged Juno to a canter, in the hope that she might be in time to warn Jabez Foster, the Stanhope farmer, before their produce there, also, was descended upon and swept away.

All night long, Count Donop and his Hessians had been attacking the works and fort at Red Bank opposite Philadelphia, with orders to take them by storm. The noise of the firing had pounded heavily upon her ears, and now, even at this distance from the guns, she did not escape their loud detonations.

These, echoing and re-echoing across the fields with

dread significance, came not from the forts and the attacking force alone, but also from the American fireships in the Delaware River. The guns of these latter were trained upon the British ship, *Augusta,* and four smaller vessels, which had grounded in the night, under opposing wind and tide, in an attempt to co-operate with Count Donop in his expedition to storm the fort.

From the rapidity and volume of the cannonading, Reba could guess that the fighting was desperate.

Suddenly a terrific convulsion shook the earth, and the air was rent by an explosion as of a hundred cannon. A pillar of inky smoke shot straight up from the river. Spreading out, tree-like, across the sky, darkening it as with a sable veil, it filled the air with nauseous, swiftly travelling reek.

The tremendous volume of sound that accompanied it, distinctly heard by Washington's army, encamped twenty miles away, shocked Reba so violently that she came near to falling from her saddle, and Juno, in a cold sweat of fright, reared and began to plunge wildly from one side of the road to the other.

Collecting her scattered wits, Reba grasped frantically at the reins, which had drooped in her limp fingers. Regaining, by a supreme effort, a firm seat in the saddle, she tried to speak reassuringly to the terrified animal, and to quiet her.

It was well for Reba, in this emergency, that she was a good horsewoman, for otherwise it would have been altogether beyond her powers to control the mare.

By the time that Juno, her dripping sides covered with lather, her mane flecked with foam, stood quivering like an aspen in the centre of the lane, Reba was faint with exhaustion from the struggle.

She was only a stone's throw from the Bartram gate.

She guided Juno to it, and up the avenue to the stable door.

Giving the mare over to the stable-hand for a rubbing down, she went, weak and shaken, to find Ann Bartram, and recover herself in her soothing presence, before going on to Broadlands.

It was the first time that she had seen the house or garden since its master had departed. Except for the difference that the advancing seasons had wrought, neither had suffered change. Lord Cornwallis had kept his word, and General Howe had proved lenient.

A gleam of scarlet uniforms near the door, where several officers were entering, showed that British were quartered on the premises, but this was the only evidence that war had penetrated the garden.

Directed by Harvey, Reba went to that end of the house where a jujube tree overhung a great stone watering-trough. Here a door opened from without into the capacious smoke-room back of the kitchen.

Ann Bartram was in the smoke-room, in the midst of paring and slicing apples for drying. She had been accustomed to perform such tasks in the kitchen, but since General Howe had billeted upon her certain officers of high rank, and their staff, she did her work when and where she could.

The large kitchen, with its vast fireplace, and its homely cheer, was a favorite spot with these men. Lounging before the hearth, boots to the blaze, the smoke of their pipes curling upward to the beamed ceiling, they talked more and more unguardedly and carelessly, as the days passed, of the war and its affairs.

Ann found the smoke-room by no means an uncomfortable retreat, and it gave space and privacy, grateful to the busy Quakeress, whose liberties had never, heretofore, been impinged upon by outsiders. A large entry

separated it from the kitchen, and gave added seclusion; a window at each end lighted it; the exit into the garden allowed the mistress to come and go as she desired.

The door into the garden stood open this morning, and Reba went through it with tottering steps, and a dizziness that made the sunny room, and Ann Bartram's buxom figure, swim before her eyes.

Friend Ann, hearing a familiar footfall, looked up, and seeing Reba's face, dropped apple and paring-knife into the wooden bowl, and came to lead her solicitously to a chair that stood by the ovenback.

"Those hideous sounds have sickened thee, poor child," she said, removing the girl's bonnet. "My own heart hath been in my mouth, and thee is but a young creature, that hath not yet learned to steady thyself as thine elders can."

"'Twas Juno, too, that unhinged me," murmured Reba faintly. "She was sorely frighted, and I had much ado to keep from being thrown while I brought her to her senses."

"I marvel that thee should be abroad this morning." Such strong disapproval marked Ann Bartram's look and voice that Reba hastened to give the reason.

"Then thy duty was plain," agreed the Quakeress, when she had heard it, "But sit thee here, child, while I get thee some cordial. Thee stands in want of it, being so shaken and alarmed."

As was her frequent habit, nowadays, she went from the smoke-room door into the garden, to reach the dining-parlor where the decanters stood upon the sideboard, instead of passing through the kitchen, which was at this moment tenanted by a group of officers, sitting about the hearth, while they discussed the possible cause, and effects, of the explosion.

Leaning her head weakly against the wall, where the

big ovenback projected into the smoke-room, Reba heard their voices. They came to her as clearly as though she were in the room with them, for the oven door in the kitchen stood slightly ajar, and at the side of the oven farthest from the fireplace, and out of sight of those who sat by the hearth, was a small square opening that communicated with the smoke-room. The door to this opening was also ajar.

"A grand blow-up for the rebels, I suppose," one of the officers was saying. "Perhaps one of 'those cursed little mud forts,' as Lord Cornwallis calls them, that are keeping us from opening the river. Donop has most likely finished them this morning, for good and all. We shall be getting word of it shortly."

"Time something was done, or we'll be forced out of Philadelphia, in order to feed ourselves. We fare well, who are on these great farms, but forage for the army will soon be impossible to obtain, and then it's good-bye to these comfortable winter quarters," said a second officer, between puffs of his pipe.

"We'll clean up the farms first," laughed the other. "A Quaker Tory, in the city, a professed neutral, you understand, has given us a list of those that promise good forage."

The first few sentences had roused Reba to resentment. Why should this officer take the arrogant ground that victory must of necessity be for the British? The next speaker had shown her how insecure might be the tenure of the enemy on their present ground. But the reply that he received was like a whip-lash to her drooping faculties. A list of farms for good forage would include her own, at Broadlands, and at Valley Forge. The latter, being well out of British reach at present, caused her no concern. She turned in her chair, and put her ear

Valley Forge.

to the opening that she might miss nothing that was said.

"There's one next to this," the officer continued, "Broadlands, a rebel property. Our men expect to descend upon it today, and make a clean sweep. It's only one of many, that will fall into the hands of our commissary. They're commandeering in the city, and if that and the country can keep us going long enough, it's not good-bye to Philadelphia, but good-bye to the 'cursed little mud forts,' if they haven't already crumbled."

Reba's eyes, which had kindled at the careless contempt of the words of the first officer, had blazed when the second spoke of information placed at the disposal of the British by this Quaker Tory, for did not every advantage that the enemy gained at Philadelphia strike a blow at General Washington's entire army, and the cause of Independence?

Anger and revolt stirred her to a renewal of vigor. She needed no cordial to send her further upon her errand. Her blood coursed in her veins in a stimulating tide, and a crimson flush had mounted to her cheeks to replace waxen pallor.

Ann Bartram, returning with the tiny glass of cherry cordial, raised her greying eyebrows in surprise, for Reba stood firmly on her feet, her bonnet tied, her cloak fastened, ready to depart.

Before Ann could speak, Reba gave warning, with finger on lip, and drawing her friend into the garden, told her in cautious tones what she had overheard.

"Drink this before thee goes," urged Ann, offering the cordial. "It will sustain thee."

"Nay, I thank thee, Friend Ann. I need it not," she said, and put it gently away.

At the stable she mounted Juno, who was now steadied and refreshed.

With the fearful sounds abated, Reba knew that the mare could be trusted to do her part.

Reaching Broadlands, she found Jabez Foster hard at work in the barnyard. The news that foragers were plundering neighboring farms, had already come to him, and he was on the alert. Bustle, though not confusion, confronted her, with Jabez, short, wiry, sandy-haired, and shrewd, as the presiding genius.

A wagon loaded with coops of barnyard fowl was being driven toward the thick woods by a farmhand. Every head of stock in front of him, a shock-haired boy moved in the same direction.

Around the kitchen door of the greystone dwelling were stacked cabbages, pumpkins, sacks of potatoes, turnips, and numerous winter vegetables, and Mollie Foster, the farmer's wife, appeared and disappeared, carrying them indoors.

Before Reba could address him, Jabez burst into voluble explanation.

"Them thievin' Hessians is all around, Miss Reba, bustin' into every farmyard and bin, helpin' theirselves liberal. Reg'lar pigs, I call 'em. Let 'em git their bellies full, the rest kin starve. But they ain't a goin' to starve you and Friend Hannah, while Jabe's above ground. I'm havin' the fowl took down to the cave. They'll be hid there. Stock's to be tethered in the holler in the deep woods. That gits them out the way o' the light-fingered. There's hay and fodder been took to the cave, too. We're a puttin' a lot o' stuff, meal and flour, and grain and sich, and fruit, and vegertubles, and cider, in the inside cellar. There's no winder ner doors to that, 'ceptin' the trap in the kitchen, and the rag carpet covers that over, and the eatin' table sets a top o' that again, and never a Hessian or a redcoat'll know what's underneath. The rest o' the farm stuff'll have to take its chanct."

Breath being completely exhausted by this recital, Jabez stopped to catch it again.

Reba regarded the provident farmer with delighted admiration. "Jabez Foster," she exclaimed, "thee is worth thy weight in gold."

She knew the underground cave, spacious and dry, guarded by trees, its entrance and steps that led down to it overhung by bushes. The hollow, to which the cattle were being driven, was in the very heart of a large wood, and rude bark shelters would suffice to protect the animals in inclement weather. The inner cellar of the house would provide abundant storage for all that was consigned to it.

"Hide all thee can, Jabez," advised she, "but I need not tell thee that. Thee thinks of everything thyself."

Having given her aunt's message, she trotted home again with bulging saddle-bags, and Jabez comforting assurance that he would arrive next morning, bringing an ampler supply than she could carry.

Excitement reigned in Philadelphia. At ten o'clock that morning a catastrophe had overtaken the British. Their frigate *Augusta,* grounded as she was, had been struck by a hot ball from the forts, had been set on fire, and had gone up in smoke and flames with frightful explosion. Houses had rocked as from an earthquake. Window-panes had been shattered everywhere. The inhabitants had been in terror of their lives.

The British officer in the Bartram kitchen had jumped to a too hasty conclusion.

"No wonder poor Juno took fright," exclaimed Reba, when she heard of it. "Indeed, aunt," she confessed to Hannah Stanhope, "I came near to fainting, for the first time in my life, with the hideous shock of it."

That evening, while the after-glow was lingering claret red behind the farthest trees, a British wagon-train under

the direction of a redcoat captain, rumbled in through the darkening avenue of Broadlands.

Jabez Foster came out to meet the reader, defiantly, but a single glance at the bristling muskets, and the determined air of the soldiers of the Crown, convinced him without words that resistance would be vain, and an expression of his mind unwise.

He turned on his heel, and re-entering the kitchen, clapped to the door in their faces. "We jest got to let 'em take what they can git," he told his wife, "and keep our heads shet, lessen they'll burn up the barn, and house, too, after they git through. Discreeshun's the best part o' valorousness, I've heerd, and this time I guess 'twill be."

By fading light, by lantern till moonrise, by brightness almost of day when the moon was fully up, the redcoats worked like beavers, loading the empty wagons with grain, and hay, and foodstuffs, that the Stanhopes had longed to share with the needy encampment on Skippack Road.

Daybreak saw the tail of the last creaking wagon vanishing in the distance, leaving corncrib, barn, and granary bereft of their store.

Before the men departed, however, the captain and his men stamped into the house, demanding cider, and whatever the larder might afford.

"Guess you'll find slim pickin's," Jabez informed them grimly, leaning with back against the wall, while they helped themselves to the contents of the pantry.

Molly Foster sat with sleepy head reclined wearily upon the kitchen table, placed evenly in the centre of a large square of rag carpet, laid over an otherwise revealing trapdoor.

Chapter XX

The daring escape of Gilbert Westwood from the Provost, and his subsequent disappearance, was the talk of the town for days. It agitated romantic damsels and prosaic matrons over the teacups of an afternoon, gave rise to interesting speculations among the military around tavern tables, or in guardrooms, and provided food for animated discussion wherever people congregated.

Added to his fellow prisoners, who remained discreet, there were two persons who could have thrown some light upon the subject: Richard Skinner, and Poll. The former had special reasons for keeping his own counsel. The latter was bound over by Skinner to hold her tongue.

Convinced though she was, that the trooper had returned to the man whom he had shot, to get his shoes, his contemptuous retort to her had left her in doubt as to whether he had found him dead, or no. Her own visit, later in the day, to the spot where the young Quaker had fallen, had left her still further in doubt. She made up her mind to return to Philadelphia, and report the matter to Richard Skinner.

Begging rides in carts, for the greater part of the way, trudging when she must, she had at length arrived in the neighborhood of the Skinner warehouse. Perched conspicuously upon an empty cask, standing upon the dock, where Richard could not fail to see her, when he passed on his way home that evening, she had waited patiently.

On his approach, she had given a signal, well understood by him to mean that she had special information for him. Without appearing to notice her, he had walked slowly by, and in a tone audible to no ear but hers, had bade her come to the warehouse after dark.

This she had done, and had given him a full account of the doings on the Skippack Road that morning.

"'Twas Gilbert Westwood that went into one end of the alley as redcoat officer, and went out t'other a Quaker woman," she concluded, "for so was Gilbert Westwood dressed, lying on Skippack Road, redcoat uniform under Quaker cloak and bonnet. What make you of that, Mister Skinner? Spy business?"

Richard Skinner shook his head. "An escape, Poll. It has set the town agog. Last night a British officer walked down the stair, at the Provost, past guard, and out of the door unchallenged. This morning Gilbert Westwood is missing from among the prisoners there. Thee saw him enter the alley. One who planned the whole, met him there, and concealed him in the dark under her aunt's cloak and bonnet. Thee marked the two enter the garden together. The Stanhopes have, no doubt, a standing pass, to visit their country properties. They must have used this to get him safe away. Where he was hid while the house was searched, no one knows. It may be he was already gone when 'twas done."

"Much good he got by it," laughed Poll. "There's a many'd rather be at the Provost with a whole skin, than tumbled in the dirt with a bullet in him." Then her thoughts turned to Reba. "What's to come to the Quaker girl when her share in it's known?" she inquired, with more than a trace of spite in her tone.

"Leave that alone, Poll. When occasion is ripe, I'll see to it. Meanwhile, keep a tight tongue in thy head."

He sealed his admonition by taking a half-crown from his pocket, and laying it on the desk edge, within reach of her greedy fingers.

Poll's eyes grew round as moons. Never had she thought to have a half-crown given her! A silver shilling, at most two, was as far as her hopes had ever gone. She clutched the piece as though she expected it to elude her.

"Thee must do more for this, Poll, than hold thy tongue," Skinner informed her. "Thee has made mention of a trooper, belonging to the rebel encampment. Does thee think thee can win him to our use?"

Remembering the words that the trooper had flung at her when last she saw him, Poll looked dubious.

"Not at once, perhaps," suggested Richard Skinner, "but a little here, and a little there. Use thy arts, Poll, and dangle before him the profits to be got by bringing thee news from camp. There will be profits for thyself, too, in that."

The girl's beady eyes glittered. Conquest of the trooper looked worth while. "Poll'll try," she promised, willingly enough, but added, " 'Twill be none so easy, he being hot rebel."

"A hungry stomach, and a ragged coat, in winter, cool many a rebel's zeal," was the sententious reply.

Here Richard Skinner struck the root of the desertions from the ranks of the Continental Army, that occurred by ones and twos almost daily, for there were some whose patriotism was not strong enough to endure the continuing strain of physical privations. There were men, also, having families dependent upon them, who could not bear up under the knowledge that these suffered lack of every comfort, and even of the barest necessities, while the head of the family was absent from

home, fighting for the common cause. This last was the reason why many refused to re-enlist when their terms expired. Yet this was only one of the numerous handicaps that Washington was called upon to face.

"Thee must find out for me first, what has become of young Westwood," said Richard authoritatively.

"Killed," opined Poll, her features overspread by a reminiscent grin. "The trooper said, ' 'Twould take a Tory wench to rob a patriot of his shoes,' and 'twas of Westwood that he spoke."

"I must have more certainty than thy opinion, Poll."

Her task assigned her, Poll did not return at once to Lancaster, as she had meant to do, but continued her vagrant life, lying in wait along the Skippack Road, where she might find opportunity for further speech with the trooper, and try her blandishments upon him, as Skinner had bade her.

While Poll haunted the neutral ground, fleeing precipitately more than once from menace by the indignant trooper, while Reba, in common with her aunt and Benjamin Westwood, waited and longed, with hope sinking lower every day, for news of Gilbert, the refusal of Richard Skinner to pay over their vessel earnings wrought increasing hardships for the Stanhopes and their neighbor.

Some necessary articles could be obtained only by purchase. Luxuries they were more than willing to do without. Borrow they would not, and they were the more fixed in this, knowing that those friends to whom they might have turned under times of peace for a temporary loan, now urgently needed every half-jo that they possessed.

In their emergency, Reba resolved, that without saying a word to her aunt, she would herself go to Richard

Skinner, and demand of him their rights, and threaten him with exposure, and if necessary with the force of the law, if he remained obdurate.

She had not been able to understand Hannah's firm refusal to go to him a second time, and Hannah had vouchsafed no reason for her determined attitude.

"Nay, Reba, it is of no use to go," she had reiterated when pressed, "Nothing can be done with Richard. We must await, with what patience we can, the return of Henry Skinner."

Often though Reba had gone to the warehouse in Dock Street in days past, to look with eager eyes at the tall ships anchored there, while her aunt transacted business with Henry Skinner, this was the first time that she had ever entered it alone.

On this occasion she came not without some natural trepidation, but she ignored the undisguised surprise of Elkanah Jones when she asked for his employer, and walked sedately after him to the counting room on the second floor.

Richard Skinner was no less surprised than his shipping clerk, to see her enter, but he veiled his countenance in his customary bland smile.

Reba waited only until Elkanah had withdrawn to come directly to the point.

"I have come for our monies, Richard," she said.

Richard Skinner, noting the charm of her grave young face, reflected that, brought to a proper submission, she might be no unpleasing addition to her fortune, when he was ready to take a wife. He answered her with provoking calmness. "That is not a matter to be discussed with thee, who is a minor. Thy aunt had my reply in September."

"The monies were due at that time. Since then we

have been sorely embarrassed for lack of them, and more at this present than ever. Though I be a minor, as thee says, the monies are in great part mine, and I have a right to speak, if Aunt Hannah does not."

"The fault lies entirely with thy aunt," he returned imperturbably. "Ask her for the reason of my refusal, and perhaps she may tell thee." He said this to discover whether Hannah Stanhope had ever laid before her niece the proposition that he had made.

"She spoke of naught but thy dishonesty in keeping from us our dues," spoke Reba bluntly, "a dishonesty that would make thy father blush for thee, could he but know it."

"Thee feels thy aunt's privations, does thee not? But what if thee had power to bring them to a close?" ventured Richard, ignoring her accusation.

"I? In what manner?" She asked it in innocent simplicity, not dreaming what his reply would be.

"Thee. I gave thy aunt to understand, when last I spoke with her, that though I could ill afford to pay out hard monies at this time, if she would give her promise that when thee is of proper age, thee should become my wife, she should have them."

Reba, turning first hot, then cold, stared at him in open-mouthed amazement. For a moment speech deserted her.

Indifferent to the scorn rising in her expressive face, Richard went on complacently. "It would be a suitable match for thee, and settle thee into solid virtues."

Reba found voice. "How dare thee offer me a bribe?" she flung at him. "I,—thy wife! Rather would I starve. When I am of age to consider such matters, it would never be thee, who could win me. Thee seeks my fortune.

That, and naught else. Does thee think I would buy justice for Aunt Hannah and myself at such a price? 'Tis no wonder she never told me of thy offer. But we will have justice. We will go to Robert Morris, or Thomas Willing, good and honest men, and have the law upon thee, since we no longer have power to bring thy evil deeds before Friends' Meeting."

The heat of her utterance choked her. She had sprung to her feet to leave the place where she had received what was to her insult.

"Calm thyself, Reba," advised Richard Skinner, unmoved by her scorn, her accusation, or her threat. He had reminded himself, while she was pouring out the vials of her wrath upon him, that there were other ways by which he could obtain this hot-tempered young creature's fortune than by taking her to wife.

"Thee speaks of the law. Have a care how thee invokes it. Thee is an openly avowed rebel. What chance has thee to gain thy point against me while Tories are in power, and officers of the Crown would punish thee and thy aunt for what I can bring against thee?"

"There is naught that thee can bring against us. We have done naught to thee." This she declared flatly, on her way to the door.

"Naught against me, I grant thee; but the affair of Gilbert Westwood's escape from the Provost, what about that?" ventured Richard, watching her closely.

He saw the start she gave, and noted how the pupils of her hazel eyes grew large, as she turned and faced him. His searching gaze held hers while she steadied herself to meet what he might say next.

"Thee managed that cleverly, Reba. The man who entered thy alley a British officer, and thy garden as a

Quakeress, the man disguised as a woman in Friends' garb, but wearing beneath it a redcoat uniform, the man shot down upon the Skippack Road——"

A scream from Reba's white lips cut short his words. "No, no! Not Gilbert! Not Gilbert shot! 'Twas some other! Not, not Gilbert!" Great tears rolled down her cheeks unrestrained, and anguish clutched at her throat.

"Who else?" continued Richard relentlessly. "It hath come to me from an undoubted source. A rebel trooper's bullet found him, who was himself a rebel. But what will the officers of the Crown mete out to thee, and to thy aunt, when I make known that both of ye were signally concerned in promoting his escape? I have thee, Reba, as thee sees."

Hands at her breast, Reba tried to still her heart's fluttering beat, tried to control her ashen lips enough to reply to her tormentor, who sat and smiled as one who knew his power over her, and took cold pleasure in it.

"Thee admits thy guilt," said Richard. "Thy acts betray thee."

"I admit naught," cried Reba, through sobs that shook her. "Thee knows that Gilbert is dear to me from childhood, and thee tells me that he is shot down. Could I do else than grieve at news so cruel, and so cruelly conveyed? I am not so devoid of heart as thee, that I could hear it and not weep."

"His escape from prison," persisted Richard, "Thee cannot deny that it was thyself who was chief instrument in it."

"The manner of Gilbert's escape is known to him. 'Tis not for thee to accuse me of it, nor for me to tell thee how or by whom it came to pass."

"There is no need that thee should confess it here, or now. But I warn thee, Reba, for thy good, that should

thee annoy me further for Stanhope monies, or call upon the law for redress, I will surely have thee brought before Joseph Galloway, who hath the Crown behind him. He will know how to force from thee the truth as to thy part in Gilbert Westwood's escape."

Self-command had come back to Reba, though grief for Gilbert benumbed her. Her face, the whiter for the dark bonnet that framed it, was lit by an undimmed courage shining through the bleakness of her despair.

"The power of the Crown will not always stand behind thee and thy dishonesty, Richard—thee, who masks thyself as neutral, and as Friend," she declared, in tones that did not falter now. "The day must come, will come, when right and justice will prevail."

She spoke boldly, yet she carried in her bosom a stricken heart, that seemed to shed its blood drop by drop on her way home, and afterward, when she crouched with her head upon Hannah Stanhope's knee, weeping as though she could never weep enough.

Chapter XXI

By the time that twilight had fallen, grief had come under outward mastery.

"Does thee wish candles, aunt?" asked Reba in smothered tones, though she was loth to have them on her own account.

"Nay. We will sit in the dusk a little longer. Thee needs rest, and I also. We have had much to try mind and heart in these last days."

Reba drew the stool on which she sat yet closer to her aunt, for the consoling sense of her nearness and tender sympathy.

No tears had been shed by Hannah Stanhope, she had given vent to no sobs, when Reba had come bringing her ill-tidings. In a silence as of death she had received it, in silence, with grave countenance and sad eyes, she bore her share of their mutual grief.

"Thee will say nothing of this as yet to Friend Westwood," she had counseled at the outset. "Sometimes reports are false. Richard Skinner is not truthful, and he may have had his purpose to serve in telling thee this. No harm can come from withholding a blow from one so little able to bear it as Gilbert's father. Therefore hold thy peace."

That Richard had spoken falsely was their only hope, and it a poor one.

They still sat passive when Phoebe rustled in to say that a blacksmith had come to the kitchen door, and asked speech with them.

"Show him in, Phoebe," sighed Hannah Stanhope resignedly, for she had no wish to see outsiders tonight. "Thee may light the candles before thee goes."

Her tear-stained eyes following the retreating handmaid, Reba wondered what could bring a blacksmith to their house on any errand whatsoever. Her memory went back unpleasantly to the day in July, when Isaac Huntoon and his apprentices had burst into the house to rifle the great desk, and carry off its contents. It was a disagreeable surprise to her, therefore, when Phoebe ushered in Huntoon himself.

But Isaac Huntoon's manner this evening had in it neither the aggressiveness that had offended at his first entrance on that past occasion, nor the apologetic air that had marked it on his exit. It was rather that of one who bringing evil tidings, is desirous of tempering it, lest it prove too great a shock to his hearers.

He lowered his powerful frame into a chair at Friend Stanhope's invitation, stretched his brawny hands upon his knees, turned over a quid of tobacco reflectively in his cheek, and bent his eyes upon the cold ashes in the fireplace.

"Like enough neither you mistress, nor you miss," he began slowly, "has forgot Isaac Huntoon. I be a blacksmith, and my trade takes me, now and again, over Skippack Road."

His hearers winced. It was the road that Gilbert had traversed, the ill-fated road where he had met his death, if Richard Skinner was to be believed. The blacksmith's manner did nothing to relieve their fears. Steeling themselves to endure whatever they must, they waited expectantly.

Isaac Huntoon rolled his quid deliberately, and went on. "The road she bends sharp now and again, and now

and again she goes straight. Times like these, with redcoats and lighthorse militaries a-galloping out onexpected, I squint ahead careful when I comes to a crooked turn. Bein' about five mile or six mile this side the Continental's camp about sunup one morning, I comes to one of these here turns."

Shifting upon her footstool, Reba fell into a nervous tremor.

Hannah Stanhope, rigidly quiet, betrayed only by her suspended breath her poignant emotion.

"Seems like I'd heerd a shot jest a second before, and says I to myself, 'There's maybe trouble ahead, Isaac Huntoon!' But I carry pistol and pass, and my business were pressing, so I drives right on, in my wagon, headed for the bend. Before I reached it, a trooper of our side, patriot I mean, gallops round the turn, and off toward Philadelphia way."

Still neither Reba nor Hannah uttered a sound. It was as though they had become incapable of anything but an intensity of listening to each word that fell from his lips, each word that seemed but to confirm their worst fears.

"Trees was thick to one side the road, and there was hazel bushes all along, and when I come round the bend, the road was bare as my hand, except that by the edge of them hazel bushes I seen what looked like a big Quaker woman, tumbled of a heap."

A stifled cry burst from Reba's throat at this. Richard had spoken truth.

Isaac Huntoon hastened, as though he wished to be through with his painful task.

"Tumbled of a heap, and says I to myself, 'Here's trouble,' and I was surer of that when I seen from the shoes that 'twas no woman. I was down out my wagon

in a minute, and lucky I came that way, mistress and miss, for under them Quaker clothes was a redcoat uniform, and under them, and that Quaker bonnet, was young Westwood."

"Dead?" moaned Reba through quivering lips.

"Dead," murmured Hannah in a solemn undertone, for Huntoon's words had robbed her of her last hope.

"Like a dead man he was, sure enough, from blood lost—spouting, I should say. He'd a bullet in his leg, and it had cut one of them artleries. Lucky I've seen surgeon's work, now and again, when blood spouts. I tears off that shawl pinned over his front, and makes him a turnykit with it and a stone. The turnykits the thing, mistress. You should have seen that spouting stop."

Breath came back to Hannah and to Reba, and hope revived.

"He's a big fellow, mistress and miss, and hard to lift, but I got him up in the wagon. A toughish job it was, strong as I be. Then I was up to the seat after him, and we away to General Washington's camp. A mercy, no less, for him."

"He lives! He lives!" cried Reba, the sun upon her face, "Thee saved him!"

"Right, miss," beamed Huntoon, "and he's to bed now, wound round with bandages, and a surgeon to bring him through. Bring him through he will, let's hope, and make him able to fight a many battles yet."

For very thankfulness to God, neither Hannah nor Reba spoke for a long moment. The one they loved was saved, and for it their souls knelt in grateful worship to an overshadowing Providence.

It was Reba who broke the silence. "How happened

it that a patriot trooper shot him down?" she asked, for it seemed exceeding strange to her that thus it had fallen out.

"'Twas the clothes, miss. They made the trooper take him for a spy, in the first place, and being full of zeal like," the blacksmith brought this forth with sheepish reminiscence, "he'd not hearken to what young Westwood said. 'One spy the less' he yelled at him and let his bullet fly, and rode off, leaving him in his blood."

Huntoon rolled over his forgotten quid, and prepared to wind up his tale. "Turnykit and blacksmith's arm, them's what give him his chance. A little more, and 'twould have been too late."

Rising he looked from one to the other, but dropped his eyes with a sudden mist over them before the flood of gratitude in theirs.

"I go now and again up Skippack Road," he offered awkwardly, swinging his hat from side to side like an unsteady pendulum, "and now and again to camp. Us being patriots all, 'twill do no harm, mistress and miss, if now and again I bring a message back and forth betwixt young Westwood and yourselves. I promised him to step in tonight, and give the news to you and to his father. There'll be a many questions, like enough, that the old gentleman'll have to ask."

"Thee has been a good Samaritan, Isaac Huntoon," said Hannah Stanhope, when, having received their messages, he was departing, "God will reward thee."

Her eyes shining like stars from relief and joy, Reba, from her inmost heart, echoed it.

Now that Gilbert was safe, they could take up the business of life again with new courage. Reba felt it rising in her next morning as she went about her household tasks.

Scraping of chairs, and rattle of accoutrements gave notice that Captain Barker, Lieutenant Brownell, and their orderlies, were about to leave their quarters for a day of duty.

Loitering in the upper hall, Reba was impatient for them to be gone.

It was not often that they were all absent at the same time, and such occasions were seized upon by the Stanhopes to restore something like order and cleanliness to the rooms occupied by the officers, and which were now sadly fallen from their high estate. Wine bottles on tapestried chair seats, smashed wine-glasses upon the mantel, stains on curtains and carpets, ink-spatters upon the tables and desk, and muddy boots in the most unlooked-for places, drove Hannah Stanhope to despair, and filled Reba with disgust.

This morning, after card-playing and wild hilarity the night before, more than ordinary dirt and confusion were to be expected, and Phoebe would be kept busy the greater part of the forenoon cleaning floors and windows, scouring hearth and andirons, and polishing furniture, while Reba dusted, and rearranged, and superintended operations in general.

After considerable dawdling Lieutenant Brownell and the orderlies departed, but Captain Barker, usually first to get away, still lingered, fidgeting about the library as though waiting for someone.

Out of sight from below, but where she could command a view of the lower hall by peeping over the upstairs balustrade, Reba finally heard the front door open and close. Taking it for granted that the Captain had gone at last, although she had not heard his footsteps in the hall, she went to the stairhead, and was about to descend.

She drew back hastily instead, for she saw that it was not Captain Barker leaving, but a stranger who had entered, and who now stood silently in front of the library door.

He was clad in dark blue homespun. A leather cap covered his head, and a belt containing a knife and a pair of pistols was about his waist.

It was for this man that Captain Barker had waited, for Reba, peeping cautiously over the balustrade, saw the Captain appear in the doorway carrying a bullet pouch, the exact counterpart of the one in the stranger's hand.

As if by pre-understanding, he extended the pouch to him, saying curtly, "To go north, as secretly and speedily as possible."

His tone was carefully lowered, and his words would have been inaudible to any but the person addressed, had not Captain Barker's voice possessed a peculiar carrying quality that brought them faintly, yet distinctly, to the young ears of almost preternatural sharpness bending over the mahogany balustrade.

The stranger took the pouch from Barker's hand, and gave him the one that was in his own.

Captain Barker, without speaking, turned, and tossed it carelessly toward a table within the library. It fell upon it with a heavy thud. Plainly that pouch contained nothing of importance.

Supposing that the messenger would leave the house instantly, Reba retreated from her post of observation only until footsteps and the closing of the front door made her certain that both men had gone. Speculating as to what the pouch contained that Captain Barker had entrusted to the stranger, which required secrecy and despatch in its delivery, she had gone a half dozen steps

downward, when she became aware that the messenger was still in the hall, looking toward the closed door leading to the dining-parlor.

She went rapidly down the remainder of the flight, demanding, as she reached the foot, "What is it that thee wants?"

The man spoke without embarrassment. "I was told, miss, that I might get a bite to eat, and a mug of cider in the kitchen, if they would give it."

"Thee shall have them," promised Reba graciously, and led the way to the kitchen.

Homely fragrance floating from pots and kettles swinging from cranes over the fire proclaimed that preparations for the midday meal were already in progress.

Dorcas received instructions to set food and drink before the stranger with a bad grace. She was not minded to have her culinary operations interrupted by having to wait upon "one o' dem Tory ramscalliums," and had he not been accompanied by her young mistress, she would have given him short shrift and scanty measure.

But Reba was as desirous to have the man eat long and abundantly as Dorcas was to be rid of him. She was resolved to gain possession of the leather pouch that he carried. If what lay concealed in it was of importance to the British, it was equally important to the patriots that she should intercept it. She must contrive to exchange the pouches—to have the messenger take away with him the one lying upon the table in the library, while she retained the other.

It would be difficult to accomplish this, would require the utmost deftness and speed in its execution, and before she attempted it she must have an opportunity so favorable that she could scarcely fail. In order that it should present itself, she must gain time. The stranger

was hungry. He should gratify his appetite to the full. While he was engrossed with food and drink her opportunity might come, for when he had seated himself upon the heavy wooden stool at the kitchen table he had placed the pouch with seeming carelessness upon a smaller stool ranged beside it. Neverthless, it was within easy reach of his muscular hand, and under his watchful eye.

Reba looked reprovingly at Dorcas, who had put a thin slice of bread, and little more than a half mug of cider before the man.

"Nay, Dorcas," she said, "be not so stingy. That one poor slice of bread, that scanty mug of cider will not carry a hungry man far. Bring out the loaf, and the knife, and fill up the pitcher. He shall eat and drink as much as he desires."

Her bandanna-wrapped head held rebelliously, Dorcas obeyed.

Giving no heed to her ill-humor, Reba left the kitchen without haste. No sooner was the door closed behind her, however, than her feet took wings to the library. Snatching up the discarded pouch from the table, she hid it in her dress pocket, capacious and deep, like every feminine pocket of that period, and sped back to the kitchen.

On her way she encountered Phoebe proceeding to the officers' quarters, armed with implements for cleansing. "Be very thorough while thee has the chance, Phoebe," she admonished her in passing.

Arrived at the kitchen, she saw that the man had already made severe inroads upon the viands. A quarter of a large crusty loaf had vanished, and the amber cider was rapidly sinking in the grey stoneware pitcher.

She dared not go near the stool at once, lest she should excite his suspicions. Stepping toward the hearth as

though prompted by curiosity concerning the contents of the cooking-pots, she inquired casually, "What's for dinner, Dorcas?"

"I'se mekkin you all a holiday dinnah, Miss Reba, tekkin de chance wen de ain't gwine be none ob dem Britishers round, to steal it," announced Dorcas, with a contemptuous sideglance at the stranger. She put down her paring-knife, and pushing from her a dish filled with sliced apples, began to flaunt the chief delicacies, in her determination to make the despised Tory's mouth water over the description of a feast in which he could have no share.

"Ovah da in de roastin' kitchen am dat lil quality-size shoat, wat Fren' Norris done presented to yo' aunt from she all's country-seat." She smacked her thick red lips, tasting its savor in anticipation, and waved her hand with a cook's pride toward the quaint Dutch oven made of sheet iron, with curved hood, closed back, and sides, and open front, in which, impaled upon a spit that ran through it was the juicy young sucking-pig, referred to by Dorcas as a shoat.

The Dutch oven, or roasting kitchen, sat before red-hot coals, the heat from which, streaming in under the imprisoning hood, was causing the melted fat from the porker to fall drop by rich drop into the pan below.

Casting an approving glance at the contents of the oven, Reba sauntered over to the table, and took her stand close by the stool where the pouch lay. Not seeming to notice the object that she so ardently desired, she apparently gave her entire attention to what Dorcas was doing.

She was aware that the man shot a swift glance at her when she approached the table, but reassured by her seeming absorption in household affairs, he dropped his

eyes instantly, and made no move to change the position of stool or pouch.

Dorcas rambled on. "Yes, Miss Reba, dat lil shoat jess fo' you all an' Miss Hanner, 'scusin what we's gwine send ovah to Fren' Westwood; an' de pickin's is fo' me an' Phoebe, wen you all's done. Moresomovah," crumbling shortening and flour between her chocolate colored fingers, "I'se fixin' to mek one o' dem open-strip apple-pies what you all lubs. My han's is in de cruss dis minit." In defiance of the time-honored rule concerning pie-crust, she always mixed the ingredients with her fingers, and had perfect results notwithstanding.

Hardly hearing what Dorcas was saying, Reba was racking her brain for some expedient by which she could sufficiently divert the stranger's attention to make him forget for a moment the pouch upon the stool. Whatever she did, it must seem to be purely accidental, so that neither at the time, nor afterward, would his suspicions be aroused.

While she was revolving the problem in her mind, the man was rapidly nearing satiety, as his slower, more deliberate bites upon his bread, his less frequent pulls upon the cider mug testified. In another moment he would be gone, and the pouch with him.

Her eyes fixed unseeingly upon the yellow bowl, Reba knew that she must act at once.

Dorcas was lifting her pastry-board to the table, preparatory to rolling out her pie-crust.

Immediately, and as if to assist her by making more room upon the table, Reba shoved back the dish containing the apples with such abruptness and force, that she overturned the half-filled mug of cider. It poured a golden-brown stream of swiftly running liquid directly toward the stranger.

In an impulse to save his clothing from a wetting, the man sprang up, but not in time to escape the flood.

An exclamation of pretended dismay on her lips, Reba made a dash at the mug, as if to right it, but by a clever assumption of clumsiness contrived to upset the pitcher, also. At the same instant her foot became entangled in the legs of the stool which held the pouch, overthrowing it upon its side.

Confusion reigned. Dorcas made frantic dashes right and left, determined to rescue her pastry from destruction. The stranger snatched up a nearby cloth, and began to shake and mop the cider from his coat and trousers. Reba, her head drooped, set the stool upright, and made as if to restore the pouch to its former place.

But the man was swifter than she. Swooping down upon the pouch, which lay on the floor, he picked it up, and stowed it in his deepest pocket. Giving only the barest acknowledgment of the hospitality that he had received, he settled his cap on his head, and strode through the kitchen door, and out by the alley.

The pouch that he carried with him was not the one that had fallen from the stool. In the commotion and confusion resulting from her bit of strategy, Reba had contrived, unobserved, to exchange the pouch that was in her pocket for the one that she desired.

"'Tis too bad, poor Dorcas, that thy tidy kitchen should be in such a sorry mess. But thee must not scold. 'Twill not happen soon again." This she said, retreating toward the door, her charming face coaxingly apologetic.

The sloe-black eyes of Dorcas followed her reproachfully. "Dat evy bit come fum bringin' dat ole Tory ramscallium into dis 'spectable kitchen, Miss Reba, 'cause you ain't nevah done no sech awkward tumblin' round in heah befo', sence you been bohn." Her voice pursued

imploringly the last fluttering fold of her young mistress's gown as it vanished through the door. "An' please, ma'am, doan bring no moh ob dem low trash in heah."

Hannah Stanhope, in her bedroom, engaged with the family mending, looked up in astonishment when Reba entered, and shutting the door tightly, turned the key. "What is it now, Reba?" she inquired.

"This," answered her niece, untying the pouch, and pouring its contents out upon the bed. The bullets tumbled out in a leaden stream, and at the last, shining brightly as it hopped out to join its dark grey companions, came an oval-shaped one of silver.

Casting down the empty pouch, Reba took the silver bullet in her hand, and went with it to Hannah's side. Examining it together, they discovered that it was in two sections, fastened together by a tiny silver screw.

Fingers quivering with excitement, Reba turned the screw until the bullet fell apart in exact halves. These were hollow, and contained a folded paper, of almost inconceivable thinness. It was covered with writing in cipher. Here was a message of importance—one that should be gotten to General Washington without delay, and he would be able to have it unraveled for his information.

Explaining to her aunt how the pouch had come into her possession, Reba returned the message to its receptacle, and fastened the oval securely together again.

"Thee sees, aunt, that the matter is urgent. I must go with it to Isaac Huntoon. No doubt he will carry the message to General Washington."

The silver container was tiny. She must protect as well as conceal it. Knotting it into the corner of a handkerchief, she stuffed it into the pocket of a housewife, that she took from her workbasket, and rolled and tied

the housewife snugly together. This hidden in her dress-pocket, she threw on bonnet and cloak, and was ready to go. The re-filled pouch in her hand, she tarried below only long enough to return it to the table in the library, in the position in which she had found it.

She had no difficulty in finding the smithy on Dock Street. The ringing of hammer on anvil pierced through the roar of guns from the besieged forts on the farther shore of the river. It was Huntoon's powerful hammer-stroke that she heard.

Fortunately for her need the smithy was vacant except for Isaac himself, who was occupying himself with the beating out of a horseshoe for use in a more pressing hour.

His back was toward the threshold, and he did not see Reba till she was at his elbow. Suspending his hammer in mid-air, he beamed upon her a good-natured and admiring greeting. The blaze from the forge that made his strong face ruddy, lit to a delicate radiance the sweet earnestness of hers.

"Isaac Huntoon," her words came quickly, "can thee go out to Skippack Road on an errand for the cause?"

"That I will," he answered promptly, lowering his hammer. "I be on my way there tomorrow."

"Oh, not tomorrow," she demurred, beseeching in her upturned eyes, "It must be now. The matter is urgent." She told him why, and took out the housewife. "Thee must carry this to the Continental camp, and see that it comes directly to General Washington's notice."

Unconsciously she had assumed an air of command, and Isaac Huntoon, his astonished gaze upon the silken roll, kindled to it, and was ready to obey. He cast off his leathern apron, and drew on cap and homespun coat. "Tomorrow's business on Skippack Road gets done to-

day, my little mistress." He took the housewife from her, secreted it temporarily in his clothing, and went to put horse to his gig.

With clip-clap of horse's hoofs, and rattle of swiftly turning wheels, the silver bullet, wrapped in Reba's housewife, and laid under the false bottom in Isaac Huntoon's gig, was traveling along the Skippack Road, before a quarter of an hour was out.

The cipher which it contained was a request from General Howe to Sir Henry Clinton in New York for an immediate reinforcement of six thousand regulars to assist in the reduction of the American forts on the Delaware River, which still held back the British fleet from entrance to the Philadelphia harbor.

Chapter XXII

A man of his word, Isaac Huntoon came and went bringing frequent news of Gilbert Westwood: in the beginning, messages, and reports of his steady progress toward recovery, even under untoward circumstances; later of his being assigned to lighthorse duty, where he was rapidly winning the favor of his superiors. An intrepid and skilled horseman, he soon made himself so obnoxious to the British by his fearlessness and daring in the performance of his duty, that a price was offered for his capture.

Gilbert's risk in approaching British outposts was great, therefore, and while those who held him dear thrilled with pride over his prowess, they were in hourly terror for his safety.

Unknown to herself, Reba, also, by her patriotic zeal and resourcefulness in the affair of the silver bullet, had won notice in high places.

It is true that what she had done had proved unavailing, except to put the American commanders on their guard, for the intercepted bullet was but one of three carried by separate messengers. Two had reached their destination, and Clinton had sent the six thousand men that Howe had asked for.

General Gates, on the other hand, had kept his men idle around Saratoga, after Burgoyne's surrender, instead of responding to Washington's urgent call for reinforcements.

Because of these two circumstances, the valiantly held

forts had fallen, after causing the British six weeks of consecutive and arduous struggle to get into free communication with their fleet.

As a result of Reba's quick wit, and her effort to serve, Huntoon brought to her, one morning in December, a request from Mr. Hilary Baker that she call upon him in his hardware store in Dock Street, at once, if possible.

She, as well as other patriots, knew that Hilary Baker, flourishing iron merchant, having interests at the Valley Forge, was on intimate terms with General Washington, and was one of his principal agents in Philadelphia.

Wondering what he could want of her, yet ardently hoping that it might be some patriotic task, or errand, she succeeded in gaining her aunt's consent to go.

"Thee wishes me to be a true patriot," she had said. "Thee believes in courage and steadfastness. Therefore thee will not deny me opportunity to prove my love of my country."

"What thee says is just, Reba," replied Hannah Stanhope. "Go, and God guard thee."

In his small private office, at the back of his shop, Reba found Hilary Baker. At that time a man of about thirty-one years, he was a conspicuously attractive personality. Broad and noble forehead, curving brows, fine dark eyes, large well cut mouth and firm chin were framed in by straight dark hair. His high white collar rose to his ears, and turned away from under his chin in long points. His black coat was relieved by the crisp whiteness of his bow tie, and diagonally pleated shirt, and sharply crimped frill.

Come as a boy of nine from the German Palatinate to Philadelphia, he was now American in heart, and a tireless worker for Independence.

"I am about asking of you, what may make you danger," he said to Reba, in warning. "Say if you have fearfulness, and do not go."

"Go?" repeated she, inquiringly.

"On an errand. A young Quakeress, our messenger, important intelligence today was to carry. But she is sick taken, when she came this morning, as if eggs to bring, from country." While he had been speaking he had been scanning her face, to gauge whether she would be equal to his demand. What he saw there gave him confidence. "Disguised as market-girl she goes. Today, on Germantown Road, British outposts beyond, a lighthorseman waiting will be, to get the message. You will this message learn, and take it for us?"

"Yes," answered Reba. There would be danger in her going, but she felt no dismay. She was glad, nevertheless, that her Aunt Hannah need not know of the nature of the service asked, until she was home again.

"Basket, bonnet, and cloak, there they lie," said Hilary Baker, pointing to the chair that contained them, "Her pass I will give you. The sentry is not too careful. The message, it is this: 'A new shipment of flounders is just coming in.' "

Not guessing that this simple innocent-sounding statement covered the military information that a reinforcement of British foot-soldiers was about to arrive in Philadelphia, Reba repeated it several times after her tutor.

She exchanged her bonnet and cloak for those of the messenger, took the pass, and with the egg-basket hanging upon her arm, she left the shop, and proceeded through Front Street toward the Germantown Road.

Since her ride home from Germantown after the battle, she had not passed that way. It distressed her to note the changes that had come about. Houses had been

torn down, fields devastated, families driven from ancestral homes, woodlands swept out of existence, to give place to the defences planned by Captain John Montressor, Chief Engineer to General Howe.

Redoubts and earthworks stretched in a straight line from the Delaware to the Schuylkill guarded by regiments of Hessians, grenadiers, and fusileers, on the side next the city, and by yäger horse and foot, light infantry and rangers on the side nearest the open country.

Her heart throbbed apprehensively as she came up to the sentry at the boundary, for she saw that it was not him alone that she must satisfy in case he doubted her. Beside him stood a Quaker, Asa Hickson, appointed to assist him by identifying those who presented passes. She was not sure that Hickson would recognize her, but if he did, she would get no farther.

Hiding her anxiety, she took out her pass, and presented it to the sentry, keeping the side of her bonnet sedulously turned toward Hickson.

The sentry gave a cursory glance at the pass, and at what was to him a familiar egg-basket, bonnet, and cloak. Without requiring Hickson's identification of her, he bade her go forward.

This she made haste to do, and was sent on as freely by the lighthorseman of the Queen's Rangers at the point of entry to the Germantown Road.

Encouraged by the ease with which she had crossed the boundaries, she was still further relieved as she looked across the stretch of barren land before her, and made out in the distance a soldier on horseback, looking toward the city. She guessed that he was waiting for the message that she bore.

He was bold, she thought, to venture thus near the enemy's outposts, though she had no doubt that his horse

was sufficiently fleet to carry him out of the way of danger if it should threaten.

She had come within a few rods of him before she perceived, with a leaping of her pulses, that it was Gilbert. She had not seen him since the night of his escape, nor had she hoped to do so for many a day to come. Now, in this unforeseen way they were to meet.

Eagerly, with face aglow, she went forward, but owing to the disguise of her unfamiliar clothing, and the shield of her deep bonnet, he did not guess who she was, and she was careful to make no revealing sign, lest she should attract the notice of the enemy's outposts, and not only prevent the delivery of the message with which she had been entrusted, but might involve him in the risk of capture.

Because of this, she had fully reached him before she dared to show her face, and not then without swift words of warning. " 'Tis I, Gilbert, but do not seem to know me. Be cautious, lest the enemy pursue us. I bring this message from Hilary Baker: 'A new shipment of flounders is just coming in.' " As she poured out the commonplace words, she offered him her pass for his inspection, in order to deceive those who might be observing them from a distance.

"A new shipment of flounders is just coming in," repeated Gilbert mechanically. It was cruelly hard to meet, and part like this, without daring to speak further, after the anxious months that had rolled between them. Their eyes met, and their hands touched, as he returned her the pass.

"I have not seen thee in so long," sighed Reba, "yet I must go forward at once, to return by another way, lest I be suspected."

She was about to do as she had said, when Gilbert

who had dismounted before she had come up with him, turned his eyes toward the British outposts. A sharp cry broke from him. A party of the enemy's lighthorse had observed their meeting, and were now advancing rapidly in their direction.

"They already suspect us. They are coming! Mount, Reba, with me!"

He sprang to the saddle, and held down a sinewy hand. "Thy foot upon my boot. Up quickly. Now cling —cling with all thy might."

Without uttering a sound, she obeyed him. Perforce she must ride astride behind him, her arms about his waist, and he must use his best horsemanship if they were to escape.

There was a price set upon him: that was her one thought. She was behind him, exposed to every bullet that the enemy might send: that was his.

Gilbert drove in the spurs, and they dashed up the Germantown Road, a half-dozen of the Queen's Rangers in hot pursuit.

Jolted loose by the movement of the horse, Reba's bonnet fell backward, and hung about her neck, exposing her bright hair. It formed a glittering target against the dark cloth of Gilbert's coat.

They were not yet in range of pistol shots from their pursuers as they went the first mile.

"Half a mile out of Germantown an American detachment waits for me," spoke Gilbert. "If I can come up with them, thee is safe."

"And thee," whispered Reba. "Be not troubled, Gilbert. I am not afraid."

They dashed on in silence after this, without looking backward. Had they looked, they would have seen that the Rangers were gaining upon them. A bullet singing

past Gilbert's ear gave them first knowledge of it.

An exclamation of dismay on his lips, he whipped out his pistol, and wheeling abruptly, he fired at arm's length. The foremost of the Rangers toppled in his saddle.

"On Selim," cried Gilbert to his horse, and the bay sprang forward.

"That thee should be here, Reba, and in such peril," groaned Gilbert, for he knew how every bullet threatened the girl behind him, who clung as he had bade her, but who gave no slightest sign of fear.

They were well within range now. The bullets of the Rangers spattered in the road, nipped leaves from the trees, and shore fragments from Reba's fluttering cloak. Manoeuvering desperately to confuse the aim of the enemy, taking advantage of every smallest variation in the road, Gilbert urged his horse on.

He had but a single bullet left, and they had not passed the second mile. Swinging again in his saddle, he sped it. A second Ranger reeled, as the first had done.

"Keep thy hold, Reba," commanded Gilbert, "for we must go faster if we can. This is our dash for life." Gripping the reins closer, he leaned far over his horse's neck and drove the spurs deeper into the faithful animal's dripping flanks. Reba leaned also, as with the speed of lightning Selim bounded forward.

Bare trees rushed past them in a dizzying whirl. Powdery snow flew back from Selim's hoofs in a white cloud. His coarse black mane cut Gilbert's face like a lash. The bright strands of Reba's hair, loosened by the wind, whipped her cheeks to glowing red.

Steadily behind them came the thunderous hoofbeats of the Queen's Rangers, though their firing had ceased.

"Look back and see whether we outdistance them," said Gilbert.

"We gain, by ever so little."

"Look back again," he begged a moment later, as the fields spun by.

"They make speed," she returned, but forbore to tell him how much.

Gilbert turned his own head, and saw. "Faster, Selim, faster yet," he spoke low in his horse's ear.

The foam-flecked beast stretched his neck in a straighter line, and did his utmost.

"We gain," cried Reba, and Gilbert saw that it was so.

On and on rushed Selim, never for an instant slackening speed.

"We leave them! We leave them far behind!" she cried again.

"Then we are saved," asserted Gilbert confidently, "for yonder come our own lighthorsemen. The Rangers will give over pursuit now."

Yet not until the pursued had come up with the American detachment did the enemy finally give up the chase, and gallop cityward.

With a gasp of relief, Gilbert relaxed the tension of his grip upon the reins, and allowed Selim to slow down into a trot.

"Thank God," breathed Reba fervently, and leaned her forehead limply upon Gilbert's shoulder.

"Dear, brave lass," murmured he, in a wave of emotion that came nigh to choking him, "Never once has thee shown fear, nor once complained; yet thee could easily have been done to death by any one of those murderous shots."

"If I had not been with thee, courage might easily have failed me," she contested sweetly, "but in truth I had fear, most deadly fear for thee, Gilbert."

They had ridden for a moment in silence when Gilbert

Steadily behind them came the thunderous hoofbeats of the Queen's Rangers.

spoke again. "How ever shall I get thee home," he wondered uneasily. "They will be upon the watch for thee all along the boundary."

"I will tarry the night with Friend Harkness," replied Reba, "and go back tomorrow in other garb. I have friends who can fit me forth. Moreover, Friend Harkness knoweth the Assistant Provost, and can contrive to get me a pass on some excuse that will serve."

"Someone of thy acquaintance, who hath a running pass, had best ride in to the city before evening, and ease thy Aunt Hannah's mind."

Thus it was arranged, and before they reached Friend Harkness' gate, Reba was shifted to the sidewise position upon the horse's back customary to womankind, and had smoothed her hair deftly, and pulled her bonnet demurely into place.

"I fear I shall not see thee soon again," he said, when she had slipped to the pavement, with his help. "Yet who can tell? How far it was from any thought of ours that we should meet today!"

"Or that we should ride together thus," replied she, her shining eyes lifted. "Thee has the words I taught thee in thy mind?" she whispered softly, as he gripped the reins.

He bent from the saddle, and so that no ear but hers could catch it he repeated the message that had so nearly cost them their lives.

She listened gravely as he repeated it. "Thee has it word for word," commended she, when he had done.

Next morning, journeying along the Ridge Road from Germantown, in a neat chaise, driven by a dignified old negro servant, went a charming young person, in satin gown of green, with velvet cloak to match. Her locks of ruddy gold peeped out from under a most fetching little

bonnet of yellow satin, lined with pale green. Furred gloves covered hands that were buried in a huge muff.

This pretty maid leaned comfortably back upon the cushioned seat, with the air of one returning from a pleasuring. At her feet, in a small portmanteau, were a bonnet and cloak of russet-brown.

Chapter XXIII

Jim Oviatt, the trooper, was riding down Gulph Road, and away from Valley Forge, chilled to the bone. Behind him lay Mount Joy. The wind blew cruelly cold across it. Snow lay deep upon its slopes, and in the surrounding valleys and wild ravines. Valley Creek forced its way to the Schuylkill under a thick mantle of ice.

On the summit of the Mount was the American encampment, a little city of a thousand or more rude log huts, which had sprung up in a couple of days before the astounded eyes of the neighboring countryfolk.

In one of these, which were dove-tailed for lack of nails, and daubed with clay, its twelve bunks rising tier above tier around its walls, he, with eleven others, slept by night, huddled in straw, and with one poor blanket apiece for covering.

When the misery of cold could no longer be endured, they sat the night through around a roaring fire, each with his blanket wrapped above his rags, his half naked body scorching in front, and freezing at the back. He who had some better article of clothing than his brothers, lent it to his comrade on sentry, to receive it again when the hours of duty there were over.

For food, often no more than an ashcake. For drink, a cup of cold water. Rare and pathetically welcome were the days when their rations included more.

Oviatt loved creature comforts. He loved, also, dice

and cards, hot spiced wine and ale in wintry weather, and boon companions ready to join him in jest and boisterous laughter. He was no physical coward. None would strike a lustier blow than he in the day of fierce fighting; none would be slower to retreat when the tide of battle turned against him; but he had no manner of stomach for patient waiting.

His longing eye traveled eastward toward where, in Philadelphia, every British soldier, however low his rank, had food and warmth, shelter, and fitting uniform, and where there was abundance of roistering for pleasure-loving men like himself.

Resentment at his hardships burned the stronger when he thought of the Continental Congress sitting at York, wrangling among themselves as to ways and means, or as to who should be Commander-in-Chief, and regaling themselves meanwhile with such frequent balls and banquets as to call down upon themselves the outraged protests of the townsfolk, while they turned deaf ears to Washington's ceaseless appeals for the relief of his suffering soldiers.

He knew, as well as any, that Congress had no power to levy upon the states for supplies or men, but he knew, also, that concerted effort and strong recommendation would have brought men and food, and every necessary, had they but exerted themselves in that direction.

Under the persistent besiegings of Poll, the trooper's smoldering discontent had been fanned, at last, into flaming rebellion.

As a lighthorse patrolman, his duties took him daily to scour the open country, and the neutral ground, intercepting parties of countryfolk who lurked in the woods, trying to smuggle their provisions to profitable patrons in the city. He skirmished, as well, in company with small

parties of his like against the lighthorse of the enemy, and cleared the roads of spies and marauders.

Poll had studiously lain in wait for him, and exercising every art and wile known to her, had finally brought him back to good terms with herself, and at last to the conviction that a clever fellow and brave soldier, such as Jim Oviatt, was throwing himself away for a losing if not an unworthy cause.

Lancaster, and Christopher and Abigail Marshall had seen little of Poll for many a week now. Barns, haylofts, and taverns had sheltered her by night, while she laid siege to the trooper by day.

Fighting or feasting Oviatt must have, and there was no prospect of either in the encampment at Valley Forge. Work there was, in abundance, for those able to engage in it, and many worked who were at death's door. Iron clanked on iron in the forge by the Valley Creek; the sound of axes felling trees and shaping logs echoed incessantly from the bleak heights; men broke the frozen ground by main force to build entrenchments; men drew to the huts in rude hand-made carts whatever supplies they had.

Oviatt cast a sullen glance backward at the smoke curling up from the campfires and wooden clay-lined chimneys of the huts. Then, in a fit of desperate anger and disgust, he dug his spurs viciously into the thin flanks of his horse. The poor half-starved beast, thus goaded, broke into a gallop that carried the trooper swiftly to the neutral ground.

Here Oviatt knew he would find Poll lurking. He had given her to understand, when last he saw her, that he had thrown scruples overboard, and was ready to turn Tory, and work for the Crown.

Once he had reached the neutral ground, she was not

far to seek. With that curious indifference to cold that had marked her since earliest childhood, she was sitting in a burrow she had made in a fodder stack, keeping a sharp eye upon the road, that at this point ran for some distance between fields.

He was abreast of the stack before she showed herself. Then she came cautiously, looking both ways, to make sure that they would be unobserved. Fields and road were empty except for themselves.

"Well, what's to do?" demanded the trooper, in unceremonious greeting, bringing his horse to a stand.

"This first," returned Poll briefly, and dove into her pocket. She brought out two immense slices of bread, with meat between, and reached them to him.

Oviatt snatched at the food, and buried his teeth in it hungrily.

"Shalt have that and better every day," volunteered Poll, when he had swallowed the last mouthful.

The trooper raised himself proudly in his saddle. "So I will," he declared. "Starve who will, Jim Oviatt's through with it."

"A man of sense," commended Poll artfully. "And now to earn silver," she proceeded, bringing out a folded paper from the bosom of her dress. "This is to be got to where young Westwood'll surely find it, but he's not to be let guess that you've fetched it, or how he's come by it."

Oviatt accepted the commission without demur. "I'll see to it," he promised, "and as for a tight tongue in my head, never fear for that, wench."

Although he was certain, without probing into the matter, that the contents of the paper were intended to involve Westwood in disaster, he had no compunctions in undertaking his share of the business. It had been

unpleasantly disquieting, after his brutal treatment of the young Free Quaker on the Skippack Road, to find that he had been brought into camp, that his identity had quickly been established, the story of his escape from the Provost verified, and that he was in a position to testify against his assailant whenever he should see fit. Thus far Westwood had told no tales, but he might not hold his peace if Oviatt, while still in camp, and secretly active there for the Tories, should inadvertently bring himself under suspicion.

To remove Westwood from the scenes by throwing him back into the power of the enemy chimed excellently with the trooper's desires, and if this message could bring it about, he was glad to carry it.

He must wait to deliver it, however, until some favorable opportunity presented itself at the encampment. Poll had impressed upon him that it must reach Westwood before the morrow, and he assured her that it should.

It was just after the evening meal when he sallied forth. The long parallel lines of snowy ground like streets between the rustic huts on Mount Joy were lighted only by the stars, and by the fires of the encampment, but the whiteness of the snow gave of itself a faint light.

As he approached the hut that sheltered Gilbert Westwood, he saw the Pennsylvania men who were quartered in it clustered outside around a bonfire built upon the snow, but Westwood was not among them. Fires burned in each hut, as well, but space within was cramped, and gave no scope for free movement for those who must occupy it. The nearly naked and the ailing must remain inside, but all who could venture into the purer outdoor air, did so, despite the piercing cold. Around the high-piled fire on its hearth of snow, they and their comrades

found relief, even though short-lived, from depression and despair, in joke and song, in wartime ballad, and stirring or mirth-provoking tale.

Having made sure that Gilbert was not among these men, Oviatt reached unobserved the window of the hut on the side farthest from the campfire. Applying his eye to a crack in the rough shutter that closed it, he saw him sitting solitary by the hearth, greasing his badly worn boots.

The trooper tried the shutter, but it was tightly fastened. There was no hope of throwing in the message by that way. The other window was in plain view of those around the campfire. Therefore he must contrive to use the door.

He dared not risk slipping the paper under the door, lest it should be trampled under foot, or shuffled accidentally out of sight, before Gilbert perceived it.

Stooping to the snow, he gathered up a handful, and moulded it into a soft ball around the folded paper. He returned to the door, opened it stealthily, and shot his snowy missile directly at Gilbert's back. He was gone before his target could turn and discover him, but not before he had seen the snow break apart as it struck, allowing the paper to fall to the floor, in plain sight.

On the following night, at the hour of eight, Gilbert Westwood, unattended, and unarmed, as was the rule for soldiers not on duty, came to a spot on the edge of a wood, a mile beyond the farthest American picket. The missive, flung to him by an unknown hand on the previous evening, purported to be from Reba. In writing sufficiently like hers to deceive him, it had bade him come to this place at this hour, to receive important news, which could not be trusted to a letter, but which would be transmitted to him through the mouth of a friend.

Coming to him as it had, in the very heart of the encampment, and therefore by what he felt must be a comrade's hand, he had neither questioned the manner of the delivery of the message, nor doubted its authenticity. Hitherto, Isaac Huntoon had been the messenger between them, but Gilbert knew that hemmed in as Reba was by enemies, she must get word to him in any important matter how and when she could.

No misgivings assailed him, therefore, as he plunged into the wood, and went toward an immense boulder between giant oaks, appointed as the place of meeting. A conspicuous landmark in that region, and within a few miles of the Stanhope farm near Valley Forge, it had long been a familiar object to Reba and himself, and on occasion a rendezvous.

The bare trees gave glimpses of the stars overhead, and a light wind rattled the few dead leaves still clinging to the oak boughs. Save for that meagre light, that fitful sound, the wood was gloomy and silent, and apparently without other tenant than himself.

Going to the towering boulder, which looked twice its size in the obscurity, he seated himself upon a fallen log at its foot to wait for the expected messenger.

Barely had he done this when two redcoats stepped from behind the boulder, one on either side of him, and presented the muzzles of their muskets to his chest.

"Show fight, and you're a dead man," said one, in a tone that admitted of no argument.

"Stand, and be ready to march," commanded the other, "You're a prisoner to the Crown."

Overwhelmed with surprise, and with dismay at his folly in having fallen so easily into the trap set for him, Gilbert, nevertheless, kept his presence of mind. He who had spoken first was a tall lean individual, grim and

lantern-jawed, and with a framework of steel. The other, broad-shouldered and burly, was of equal height with his companion. Either of them alone, even if unarmed, would prove no mean antagonist in a hand-to-hand fight. Both were well armed, and he was without a weapon. To resist would be folly. He rose, and guarded closely by his captors, went from the wood to the open road.

"Jolly escape you made from the Provost," jeered the lean redcoat on his right.

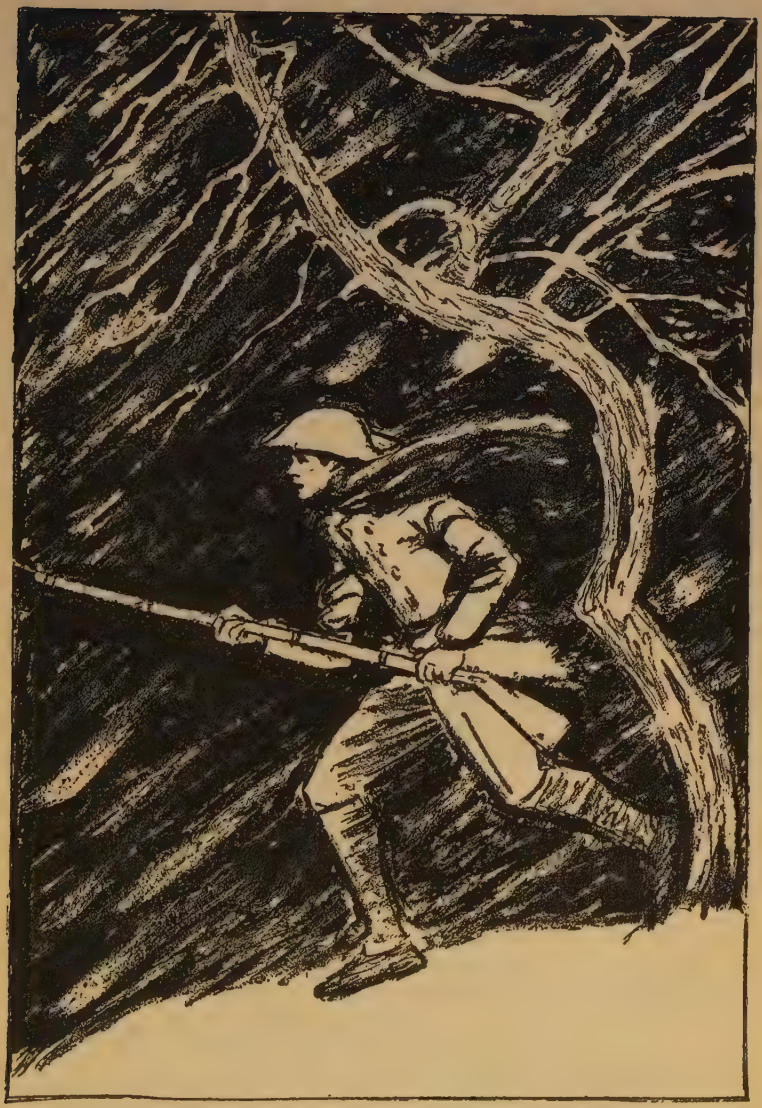
"A nice long rot there you'll be having now," taunted the burly private on his left.

Gilbert, plodding silently between them, meditated how he should escape fulfilment of the prophecy, and wondered who, using Reba's name as a blind, had decoyed him hither to betray him to the enemy. It did not occur to him to suspect Richard Skinner of being the author of the missive, or of having any motive for desiring his capture.

A mile distant from Valley Forge, with Philadelphia seventeen miles in the other direction, he knew that it was not possible to convey him within British lines without trouble and some delay. There were, however, a number of farmhouses with Tory owners in the vicinity, and he took it for granted that he was to be marched to one of these, and confined until he could be taken further on the way.

Doubtless the plan was to extort information from him, if possible, regarding the American encampment, and his captors would, of course, receive the price which had been set upon him. Prison, perhaps death staring him in the face, he marched on.

Life and liberty were sweet to him. Sweet while his father lived; sweet while Hannah Stanhope, who had been as a mother to him, lived. Sweetest of all because



Gilbert retreated through the other end of the ravine.

of Reba—Reba, with her hair of shining ruddy gold, her luminous hazel eyes, her rose-leaf cheek, but most of all because of the high pure spirit burning within her like a white flame. No, he would not yield up either life or liberty without a struggle, even though the struggle should be in vain.

They were approaching a secluded farmhouse. A light burned in its window, casting long rays across the snow to guide the redcoats with their prisoner to the farmhouse door. Gilbert knew the owner of this small farm for a surly fellow, and a rabid Tory, unpopular with his neighbors, and of a generally unsavory reputation. Once under the roof of this man, there would be scant hope of escape.

He determined to attempt it now. He knew that he could not depend on strength, but must employ strategy instead.

The redcoats marched close to him, one on either side, confident that they would soon have their prize safely lodged under the Tory's roof.

They had reached a point on the road where a bridge crossed a wooded ravine. One end of this ravine bent toward Mount Joy. Gilbert knew its every turn, its every sheltering rock and hollow. There was no railing to the bridge, and the snow lay deep in the ravine.

As they were about to cross the rough logs of the bridge, Gilbert stooped suddenly, encircled an ankle of each of the redcoats in an iron grip, and bringing them together with a violence and force that took the men completely by surprise, sent them sprawling into the snow in the ravine. Upon the bridge, and completely out of their reach, lay their muskets, which had been jolted unceremoniously from their hands by their unexpected fall.

Before either of the men could recover himself, and flounder out of the snow, Gilbert had snatched up both muskets, had hurled one some distance away, and keeping the other aimed at his disconcerted enemies, retreated through the other end of the ravine toward Mount Joy, and disappeared.

Jim Oviatt, seeing him next morning mount and ride away to duty, bit his lip with chagrin, and gave the disappointing news to Poll before the day was done.

Through other channels, and almost as promptly, Richard Skinner learned of the failure of his plot, and knew that he must await another and better opportunity for satisfying his animosity toward Gilbert, and his desire to punish Reba and her aunt for their scorn of him and his proposals.

Chapter XXIV

OLD was the Valley, old the Valley Stream, but no year that had gone before, nor any that has come after, could bear witness to such terrible sufferings of mind and body, such intolerable misery, and patient endurance as this winter that had begun for the Commander-in-Chief and his army on December 12th, of 1777.

What prayers ascended from Valley Forge only the Almighty knew. What hopes died there, what new ones took their rise none can even dimly guess. In agony, in fear, in doubt, in heroic steadfastness, and courage, and endeavor, beyond all our power to realize, our nation had its birth.

Washington, who knew how to keep state in his mansion on the Potomac, knew how to live simply here. Bread, salt herring, and a jug of cold water, formed the Spartan fare of his soldiers. He made it his own. Congress had shorn him of every power except that of actual military command, had broken up his commissariat, and his carefully planned system of transportation. After thus denuding him of every means of caring for his men, who, reduced by starvation and nakedness were dying in multitudes, this Congress, sitting comfortably at York, in the midst of plenty, holding gay balls and banquets, with music and wine, feasting, and the dance, jeered at and insulted him, and asked him why he did not fight.

Forced into a Fabian policy not of his own choosing,

Washington, a heroic and noble figure, held, in spite of all, the allegiance of his countrymen, the devotion of his generals, the unswerving loyalty of the patient long-suffering soldiers on the icy, wind-swept hills of Valley Forge. He was not less, but more a man than most; not less human, but more truly human. Those who, in a later day would seek to belittle him in the eyes of the world, belong of right with the recreant, callous-hearted, and prejudiced men of the Continental Congress of 1777 and 1778.

February had come, and still the hideous famine continued; still the men, almost naked, dragged themselves, half alive, about the encampment, or died by the hundreds and thousands of dysentery, pneumonia, and putrid fever.

It was almost more than Reba Stanhope could bear to sit at home, housed and clothed, and hear of the privations that were the lot of the American Army at Valley Forge, to see with her own eyes the condition of those who deserted, and came in to Philadelphia to General Howe. Her heart was wrung with pity for them, nevertheless she gloried in the fact that almost without exception the native-born Americans stuck to their colors and to their posts. In the main the deserters were of foreign birth.

An acute longing possessed her to be among the sick and needy in the encampment, ministering to them in every way known to womanly tenderness and skill.

Isaac Huntoon had come "now and again," bringing them word of the camp, and especially of Gilbert, but some weeks ago he had volunteered his brawny muscles to the work at the Valley Forge, and his smithy in Dock Street was closed.

It made her restive and depressed to be cut off from

any going out of personal service, and the more so, because she knew that General Howe forbade the sending of supplies by Philadelphia patriots to the camp of his enemies. No blankets, no medicines, no supplies of any sort that would alleviate misery, or assuage anguish, were allowed to pass through British lines.

On the contrary, his lighthorsemen, accompanied by large bodies of foot-soldiers, scoured the country round to obtain forage for his army, and paid high prices to the farmer folk who succeeded in getting through by stealth to British outposts with fowl, and eggs, butter, and vegetables. For the American prisoners in Philadelphia, he would permit little to be done.

This was the way of war, they told her, but Reba rebelled at the cruelty of it.

Benjamin Westwood pined for news of his son. How could he know that Gilbert was not among the dead?

Hannah Stanhope seldom spoke, but her waxen face, and brooding eyes, showed where her thoughts were. Neither Reba nor she had allowed themselves to dwell upon Richard Skinner's sharp dealing with them. When Spring came they would right themselves, if it were possible.

"Aunt Hannah," exclaimed Reba desperately, one day in mid-February, "I must do something to help. Say that I may go out to Ridge Farm with Moses Lambert when he comes in on Third Day. Friend Norris will give me medicinal herbs for the sick, in the encampment. Once at our farm, I shall contrive some way to get them to the doctors at Valley Forge."

The exigencies of the times had become such that Hannah no longer made objections. "Go, my child," she consented briefly. "I know thee needs to go."

So Reba jolted out toward the Ridge Farm, on the

wagon seat with Moses Lambert, the farmer in charge there. Dangling around her waist, hidden under the thick folds of her skirt, and sewed up in many small cotton bags, were a great variety of priceless herbs, which only Friend Norris could supply.

A rough piece of sacking stuffed with straw to make more comfortable the wagon-seat, was really a covering for a pair of thick blankets, torn from Reba's own bed to give where need seemed most acute.

Moreover, she and her aunt were agreed that whatever on the Ridge Farm might be of use to the encampment, was to be offered without stint.

"The Valley farm yielded well, this past year, did it not, Moses?" asked Reba as they drew near it.

"Never better," Lambert assured her with a successful farmer's pride.

"We shall have the more to give," said she, gravely.

Already the Valley farm had furnished much in wheat and straw to the encampment.

"My pass serves me only to the outpost. There I must get a permit to go farther."

The farmer nodded, and the wagon jogged on.

Where the Gulph Road begins to ascend to the heights of Mount Joy, they encountered the outmost picket. Reba, alighting, showed the pass that had carried her thus far, and made her request, that she be allowed to go to one of the physicians in the encampment.

"The Provost Marshal gives the permits," said the sentry. "You must wait here for it, or come back and get it."

"Must I wait long?"

"Maybe an hour, maybe several days," was the discouraging reply.

Reba's face fell. She had not counted upon such uncertainty.

The sentry saw her disappointment, but could only say, "Give me your pass. It will be sent to him, and he may approve your going further, or he may not. That's the best I can do for you."

Relinquishing the pass, Reba climbed into the wagon. "I will come back in about an hour," she said.

A little more than the hour had elapsed when she returned, and was overjoyed to have handed to her a permit to speak with Dr. James Thacher, physician and surgeon in the camp hospital.

She left the outpost, and proceeded to the next sentry, stationed directly at the entrance to the camp. The frightful rags, and the frost-bitten hands of the first sentry had filled her with pity. His feet bound with scraps of old blanket, that showed naked flesh between the strips, were buried in his hat, for what poor warmth it could yield.

The second man stood with bare and bleeding feet in the snow, and deep red stains marked every step he took. Shirtless, head unprotected from the piercing wind, his trousers in ribbons, he was only partly swathed about the shoulders by a fragment of a worn-out quilt. But he stood his ground, as had the other, with a dogged patience in his drawn face and hollow eyes, a determined faithfulness in his look, that lifted him above the wretchedness of his body into that realm where love of country, and the will to achieve its freedom reigned.

He looked her over with black, hawk eyes, read the permit, handed it back with stiff blue fingers, and passed her on to a soldier who was to conduct her to the log hut on the hill which served as a hospital.

The trees, sheathed in ice, glittered like diamonds in

the sun. A musical tinkling came from their boughs as the wind stirred them. The wintry blue of the sky overhead was unflecked by a single cloud. Beneath, the snow lay crisp and cold everywhere.

Strange snow that stretched before her—not pure and white, as is its lovely wont, but crimsoned by the footprints of naked feet. Not here and there a footprint; the roads between the huts, and the ground throughout the encampment were dyed to the semblance of one vast red carpet by the life-blood of patriots. As truly was that blood shed for the great cause of freedom at every step they walked in that wintry encampment as ever blood was shed on battlefield in heat and wild ardor of tumultuous fighting.

Reba started back in horror from the sight. She clutched at the arm of the soldier who was leading her.

"Is it all like that?" she asked, pointing a shaking finger to the ground.

The soldier looked at her grimly. "Yes—all like that."

In silence at first, overwhelmed by the unbearable pain that the sight caused her, she walked on, and then she began to pour forth a flood of questions. Where was destitution greatest? Where were blankets most required? Where should she go to find the one who could give answer to all she wished to know, if he could not?

To her surprise, the soldier darted suspicious glances at her, and replied in noncommittal monosyllables. Finally he rapped out, "You're too curious, mistress. Colonel Tilghman at headquarters'll settle you and your questions."

Abashed and astounded by his rude speech and manner, Reba retired into herself. She had her pass, her intentions were innocent, she saw no reason why the man

should resent simple questions springing from a heart melted to pity and sympathy. Yet how could she take umbrage, when from head to foot the soldier showed how much he had borne for his country's sake? Some excess of zeal, such as seized Isaac Huntoon at times, was causing him to distrust her.

Colonel Tench Tilghman, volunteer and efficient aide to General Washington, and trusted to an uncommon degree by him, scrutinized Reba narrowly while the sergeant made his accusation. This courteous son of Maryland saw nothing in her face or bearing that seemed to give ground for suspicion. Nevertheless, numberless desertions from the pickets could be traced to the influence of pitying women, rendered blind to greater issues by the sight of suffering.

There were women, too, as innocent of mien as this Quaker girl, who had proved to be spies, or intelligence-gatherers, who had carried information to the enemy, on their return to Philadelphia, as to the hopeless miseries of their antagonists. The country round was filled with disaffected Quakers, who gave Washington just cause for distrust of them, and of what transpired at their Quarterly and Annual Meetings.

"This girl is a Quakeress," thought Tilghman, "and we must be on our guard." He cross-examined her, therefore, and she, wounded and disappointed at this unfortuitous beginning of her errand of mercy, answered him with what calmness and dignity she could muster.

"You must understand," he said, "that camps must be rigorously protected, and strangers who arouse suspicion, even though they have passes, must be identified, and their integrity established before they can be allowed to go about within the lines. Are you personally known to Dr. Thacher?"

"Nay," confessed Reba.

"What is your special errand with him?"

"It concerns the sick." She refrained from mentioning the precious herbs that she had brought. She had promised Friend Norris to give them to none but a physician. Only as a last extremity would she do otherwise.

"Is there no one in the camp who can vouch for you?"

"Yes. Gilbert Westwood, a lighthorseman of the Pennsylvania line. We have been friends since infancy."

"Private Westwood's out on duty," volunteered the sergeant stiffly.

"Is there no other who can speak for you?" asked Tilghman, favorably inclined to her, yet firm in his duty.

"Isaac Huntoon, a blacksmith at thy forge."

But word came back from the forge that Huntoon was gone to fetch iron from Warwick Furnace.

"Take me to General Washington, then," begged Reba in desperation. "Quakeress though I be, I can say that to his private ear that will establish his confidence in me."

Colonel Tilghman hesitated. The Commander-in-Chief, his mind occupied with weighty affairs, had no time to waste upon ordinary visitors to the camp.

"I beseech thee, ask him to see me," urged Reba.

Tilghman rose, entered General Washington's office, and returned in a moment with the desired permission.

In the square back room of the small grey stone house that served as headquarters, sat the Commander-in-Chief. In front of him was a large table, covered with maps and papers, and provided with quill pens and inkhorn.

Very simply dressed, without marks of a commanding officer, his tall, nobly proportioned form, carried with

graceful and impressive dignity, filled the large wooden armchair in which he sat.

When Reba crossed the threshold, he raised his powdered and queued head, and as she took the seat he indicated, she looked into deep-set, wide-apart blue eyes, thoughtful and piercing, yet kindly. Firm lips and chin, large sagacious nose, broad high forehead,—these were but the outward semblance of the man whose power she felt as she drew near. No trace of haughtiness marred his unaffected and indescribable dignity. Awed by admiration and respect, Reba waited for him to speak.

In his prominently knuckled fingers he held the pass which the Provost Marshal had given her, and which Colonel Tilghman had laid before him.

"You claim to be Reba Stanhope, a Quakeress, loyal to the American cause," he said, studying her ingenuous countenance as he spoke. "You have asked questions which, simple as they were, have brought you under suspicion. Those who can identify you, are absent at this time. What can you say, in addition to your appearance of truth and sincerity, which will make me certain that you can be trusted to go about in the camp?"

"This," answered Reba, with ingenuous simplicity of manner, her clear eyes looking directly into his, "I am a Free Quaker, sworn to the service of my country. My opportunities are small, but I use them as they arise. I would not speak of those services, Your Excellency, except to prove my integrity, and to win the privilege of further service."

She paused for an instant, hesitating to name them, but in this case she must.

General Washington, gravely attentive, and with the gracious gentleness which he always showed to the

young, was stirred by the sweet modesty of her bearing, and felt himself insensibly drawn to confidence in her.

"Gilbert Westwood could tell thee how I helped him to escape from prison in Philadelphia. Isaac Huntoon, the blacksmith, could say how I sent thee a silver bullet containing a message from General Howe to Sir Henry Clinton. Mr. Hilary Baker could bear me witness that I carried for him, to one of thy lighthorsemen, in December, a message at peril of my life. If this be not proof of my loyalty, what can I offer?" She ended, but kept her appealing eyes upraised to his.

"It is amplest proof," he assured her. "I would that every one of our daughters were as truly freedom's daughter as yourself. What is your wish? I will gratify it, if I can."

"To serve,—only to serve," cried Reba, stretching eager hands to him. "I have come bringing priceless herbs for the sick, obtained from Friend Mary Norris. I have promised her to give them directly to a physician, lest they become injured by ignorant handling. If thee will permit it, my farmer will bring thee, as they can be got out of the city one by one, what quilts and blankets we can obtain. The produce of our Valley farm, except such of it as is required to maintain our farmer's family, is thine for the taking. Trust me, I beseech thee, and let me serve."

"You have served much," he answered, "and you shall serve more."

He stepped to the door and summoned his aide.

"I am fully satisfied as to the integrity of this young girl," he said when Colonel Tilghman entered. "Madame Washington goes, a few moments hence, to visit the sick in the hospitals and huts. Present her with my compliments, and say that I ask as a special favor that she

"You have served much," he answered, "and you shall serve more."

permit Reba Stanhope to accompany her on her rounds, and to perform her errand to Dr. Thacher."

"Oh, Your Excellency," stammered Reba, overcome. She could say no more, but followed Colonel Tilghman, with a swelling heart, to the opportunity that had been granted her.

Martha Washington, given by most the title of Lady Washington, was, as her husband had said, about to leave headquarters to make her daily rounds among the sick. The room next the Commander-in-Chief's office was filled with the wives of his generals, come to cut out garments, to mend, to knit, in company with her who was the central figure of the women of the General's official family. Mrs. Knox, Lady Stirling, Mrs. Greene, prominent among them in good works, were her close friends and coadjutors.

A wholesome lovable presence, Madame Washington's rosy handsome face was lit by warm brown eyes. Her hair, snowy with powder, was rolled away from her forehead under a large white matron's cap. A full soft white kerchief relieved her plain brown worsted dress. In her were personified the gentle wise qualities of benignant womanhood at work for the relief of suffering humanity.

Colonel Tilghman spoke a few words in her private ear, and added his Commander's message.

"Yes, yes indeed," Reba heard her say heartily, and in the next instant she felt a warm hand on hers. Warm brown eyes regarded her with kindly interest, and a voice instinct with cordiality said, "You are just in time, my child. Help is always welcome, particularly where it is as bitterly needed as it is here. We will go to Dr. Thacher first," she added, when Reba told her of her special errand to him.

In a log hut several times larger than those used for the housing of the men, they found him. This rude building, exact counterpart of the other hospitals of the encampment, had no beds. The men lay upon straw, hard to obtain, seldom changed because of its great scarcity. It was spread upon the frozen ground. Blankets were few. Straw and tatters must act as covering also.

In abject and poignant destitution, too great, too moving, for words to depict, some endured in death-like silence, some groaned aloud in helpless anguish. Reba, thinking of those who still dragged themselves to the post of duty, wondered with a sickening pang how long it would be until they came to lie beside these, or to take their place.

Madame Washington's low voice introducing her to Dr. Thacher recalled her.

"I have brought a young friend, Reba Stanhope, with me today, and she has an errand to yourself, Dr. Thacher."

"Herbs for the sick, from the shelves of Friend Mary Norris, in Philadelphia," explained Reba, in response to the inquiry in the eyes of the dark little man. Lifting the lid of the basket lent her by Madame Washington, she exposed to his view the bags, labelled clearly by Mary Norris' careful hand.

Dr. James Thacher bent his professional gaze eagerly upon them, and scanned their names. "They come as manna from heaven," he exclaimed enthusiastically, as he turned them over, "they will save many, many lives."

Never could Reba forget this first glimpse of hers of the hospitals and huts of Valley Forge. The first, for there were many visits that succeeded this, in which she proved herself to be an able and untiring helper.

How much she did to keep the fires of patriotism

alight, she would never know, for through those darkest days at Valley Forge, her spirit was as an ascending flame on the altar of her country's need, a light that never failed, a warmth that soothed, and comforted, and blessed. Many a dying eye looked after as though an angel had been a visitant; many a man took hope and lived again after her whispered words.

Chapter XXV

Every tavern, or inn, or coffee-house, in Philadelphia, was doing a roaring business. Food was to be had without stint there, liquors flowed freely, and playing at cards for high stakes whiled away the hours for those who cared to indulge, and could afford it.

Scarlet uniforms, satin coats and flowered waistcoats of every conceivable hue, lace ruffles, gold epaulettes, fluttering knee-ribbons, flash of paste buckles made the streets gay where the beaux of Howe's army went resplendent.

The Tory belles of the city outvied them. Powdered and curled tresses, headdresses a foot high of ribbon and lace decked with feathers and jewels, sweeping skirts and close fitting bodices of silk and satin and velvet, in tints that rivaled those of the rainbow, flourishing of gay fans,—these were the fineries and fripperies of the feminine butterflies that flitted carefree through the revelries of General Howe's occupation of Philadelphia.

British generals danced and banqueted, and young officers, sighing at the feet of Rebecca Franks, Miss Auchmuty, Ann Willing, Margaret Shippen, the Chew sisters, and all the rest of that bevy of coquettish damsels, wrote poems to their grace, their wit, their beauty, and their charm, and devised pleasure upon pleasure for their entertainment.

Gambling rose to such a pitch that many an officer, playing at faro, or vingt-et-un, staked his commission,

and lost it to his inferior in rank. At that period, when commissions in the various regiments of the British army were purchasable, and those in certain regiments were more costly than others, officers frequently gambled away the whole worth of their commissions, and thus became civilians, or staking and losing a portion of the whole, became lowered in rank, or were compelled to buy a place in a less expensive regiment, with what they had left.

Jim Oviatt, going by the Bunch of Grapes, cast an envious eye at the soldiers around its tables, uproarious over their cards and wine. It was to join in such convivialities that he had turned his back upon Valley Forge and its miseries, only a dozen hours earlier; but he must hold his desires in leash a little longer.

His stomach had been filled, and his rags had been exchanged for citizen's garb of dark cloth. Oviatt loved a uniform, and conspicuous colors, but the errand upon which he was at present bound required unobtrusiveness, and he was forced to be content with his apparel, until it could be exchanged for something more in accordance with his preference.

Up to the time that he had come under the spell of the temptations held out to him by Poll, his dealings had always been open and above board. Had it not been for his lack of every creature comfort during the bitterly hard winter on Mount Joy, he might have remained proof against her and Richard Skinner; but she had attacked him persistently at his weakest point, until he had swerved far from that state of mind and heart which had been his until after the reverses of Brandywine and Germantown.

This evening in April he was on his way to the house of Benjamin Westwood, to execute a commission from

Richard Skinner. For the past two months Skinner had known of Reba's weekly visits to the encampment at Valley Forge, made under cover of trips to the Stanhope farm in that vicinity, and that on her return, she and her aunt regularly spent the hour after supper with Benjamin Westwood.

It was to discover whether anything was said on the occasion of these neighborly visits that would be of advantage to him in his personal activities for the Crown, that Skinner had directed the ex-trooper to go to the Westwood house while Friend Westwood was at supper, and secrete himself in the parlor, to overhear, and afterward report to him the subject of the conversation.

It was not a commission that Oviatt cared to undertake, nor one without some element of risk, although that, in the quiet household of an old Quaker gentleman, would be trifling.

He turned his head resolutely away from the open door of the Bunch of Grapes, and proceeded toward the large red brick house on High Street, accurately described to him as to location and appearance by Richard Skinner, so that he would be able to distinguish it from its counterpart, belonging to the Stanhopes.

Entering by the alley-gate, he was to descend through the cellar-door in the yard, as opportunity offered. By going to the stairs at the opposite end of the cellar, and mounting them, he would find himself before a door that opened into the front hall of the house, and away from the room where Friend Westwood would be at supper.

It would be easy enough at that time to cross the hall into the parlor, and there conceal himself in a closet seldom opened, and which was next the chimney-piece. Once hidden, he could hear what might be said, and

escape later on, by the front door, when the Stanhopes had departed, and Benjamin Westwood had retired early, as was his custom, to his bedroom overhead.

Twilight had fallen, but in neither house were the front rooms illumined as yet by candle or firelight, when Oviatt arrived. The Stanhope and Westwood households were at their evening meal, and Captain Barker, Lieutenant Brownell, and their orderlies were at supper at the Purple and Blue Tavern.

Feeling certain that he remembered correctly the explicit directions given him by Richard Skinner, the ex-trooper dove into the alley. Memory played him false, however, and instead of opening the gate to the left, he pushed open the one to the right.

Once inside the yard, every particular, as he proceeded, tallied exactly with Skinner's description. Stealthily, and unseen, he crept to the cellar-door, which stood conveniently open, and descended the steps into the cellar. The light was still sufficient to enable him to descry the stairs at the opposite end.

He advanced with perfect confidence, and when he cautiously opened the door at the stairhead a moment later, he found just such a hall and large room opening from it as he had been led to expect. From the back of the house came whiffs of cookery, faint clatter of china and glassware, and subdued voices. Supper was in progress, and his coast was clear.

Softly, though boldly, he slipped across the hall, and into the room which he had been told would offer concealment and opportunity to overhear.

A yard beyond its threshold he stopped, puzzled, and filled with misgivings, for the interior, even in the dimness of twilight, gave unmistakable evidence that its occupants were soldiers. Military boots stood on the

hearth. A long military cloak hung from a knob that ornamented the top of a tall moon-face clock standing across one of the corners of the room. Bottles, glasses, and a pack of cards cluttered a round table. Pipes lay on the mantel. A pale blue satin coat with ruffles of Mechlin lace, and a yellow velvet waistcoat were flung over a chair.

These were not such appurtenances as belonged to a Quaker gentleman. Nor was there any closet in the wall by the chimney-piece.

It was borne in upon Oviatt that he had taken the wrong turn from the alley, and had come into the Stanhope house.

He turned uneasily upon his heel to get himself out before he should be discovered. To return by the way he had come involved more risk now than he cared to take. He must slip out by the front door, and from there back into the alley.

But before he could move in that direction, loud talking was heard from the doorstep, accompanied by the sound of a turning knob. The door was flung open, and Oviatt knew himself trapped.

The men whose voices he had heard were pausing on the flagged step, and Captain Barker was speaking: "Come in, and have a game of vingt-et-un."

It gave Oviatt a moment's time. A rapid glance around the room revealed no place of concealment, unless,—he looked at it in desperate hope,—unless the tall clock standing aslant one corner of the room might provide it. Placed thus, so that its moon-face might show the time plainly, from whatever quarter one might seek to ascertain it, there was space behind it, of a sort.

In three noiseless strides he reached the clock. Without a betraying sound he moved it far enough out at

one side to allow himself to pass behind it. He had not more than wedged himself into the space there, and settled the clock back into its place, before the men entered the room, and he heard a snarling complaint from the first comer because there were no candles lighted.

Captain Barker, and Lieutenant Brownell, had brought with them Lieutenants Ellis and Snowden of the Dragoons, and Captain Voss of the Grenadiers, to spend an evening over the card-table after an early supper at the Purple and Blue.

Lights blazed from every brazen sconce upon the wall, and in the silver candlesticks upon the table, as the orderlies went from candle to candle with splinters kindled at the embers upon the hearth, the day of matches being still far distant.

Oviatt, in his narrow refuge, congratulated himself that Captain Barker's cloak hung far down the side of the clock nearest to view from the table, where the five men were seated, ready for the game.

Corks popping, and liquid gurgling, the orderlies poured wine for the officers, and the swish of shuffling cards penetrated tantalizingly to the trooper's ears, as he wondered how long he was to be confined in his cramped position, and by what means he was eventually to effect his escape.

"Low deals," announced Captain Barker, placing the pack of cards in the centre of the polished table.

"Mine," laughed Captain Voss, displaying a two spot triumphantly, when all had cut for deal. Stakes were announced, counters laid, and the play began.

Vingt-et-un was Oviatt's favorite pastime. Since he must remain for some time a prisoner, it would mitigate his discomfort to hear, though he could not see, how the game progressed.

Fortune was favoring Captain Barker on this occasion. He won many times what he had staked, and the deal passed over to him. Having obtained this signal advantage, he became cautious, that he might not lose it by overdrawing, and time after time, by the overdrawing of his companions, or by ties, his winnings were greatly increased.

"Reckless with your money, Brownell," he commented sardonically, as he swept up and pocketed the golden sovereigns at the close of a game in which the Lieutenant had staked and lost half of the pay that he had received that morning.

"Luck turns," said Brownell, with a wry smile. "I'll risk the other half." There was desperation in his tone, for luck had gone steadily against him these several days past, and he was determined to take this last chance to get back a portion of his losses.

He played and won back the whole.

Barker, who had doubled all stakes, lost both his money and the deal with a bad grace. His black brows lowered, and his eyes had an ugly gleam. Sitting directly facing the clock, every varying expression of his countenance was distinctly visible to Oviatt, who watched it as well as followed the fortunes of the game through a small peephole which he had contrived between the wall and the edge of the Captain's cloak.

Soon there was no question that the tide had definitely turned for Barker, and from being unpleasantly jocose, and cruelly facetious, he grew surly and morose, and determined as the other had been to make good his losses. Bit by bit he ventured unwisely, and at last prudence deserted him with a rush, and his money being exhausted, he staked the whole of his captain's commission.

"By Jove, Barker, you're a fool," said Captain Voss

to him, in an undertone, when the stakes were announced, "You'd better reconsider."

"My stake is named," returned Barker curtly, and Voss, rebuffed, made no further remonstrance.

When the last card had been dealt, and all hands shown at the close, Barker shoved back his chair abruptly, and rose from the table with an oath. He was a ruined man.

At that same moment, Jim Oviatt, overpowered at last by the dust which Phoebe had allowed to accumulate upon the back of the clock, gave vent to the lusty sneeze which for several seconds he had been struggling to suppress.

Instantly every man was on his feet, staring in amazement at the corner from which the sound had unmistakably come.

"A rebel spy!" shouted Captain Voss, his hand on his sword hilt.

"Behind the clock!" ejaculated Brownell, striding toward it.

Barker anticipated him. Enraged at the ruin and disgrace that he had brought upon himself, and stung by the thought that it was known to a despised informer, as well as to his comrades-in-arms, he stood where he was, and jerked a pistol from his belt. Taking aim directly at the centre of the clock, he fired.

Oviatt, irresolute, after his sneeze, as to whether he had best show himself at once, or remain where he was, felt a sharp sting as the bullet, passing directly through the clock, found him. Smothering a groan, he slumped sidewise in his corner, telling himself in a dazed fashion that he would explain,—that Skinner would clear him,—that he was not seriously hurt.

He was wrong as to the last. The bullet, partly spent

though it was by its passage through the walls of the clock, had penetrated his heart. His eyes were glazing, and he was fast drifting into unconsciousness by the time the subalterns had dragged the clock from before him, and he crumpled into a heap at their feet as they set it clear away.

Barker glanced down indifferently at the expiring trooper. "You perceive, gentlemen," he informed them, with an acrimonious smile mantling his thin lips, "that the moon-faced clock had more of a body than we had supposed."

Coming in haste to the doorway, to discover the meaning of the shot, and the terrible groans that had followed, Reba and Hannah Stanhope paused there, frozen with horror and consternation. It was only too plain that the trooper was beyond help.

Barker looked without remorse into their accusing eyes.

"A rebel spy," he said contemptuously, and spurned him with his foot.

Chapter XXVI

MAY had once more made green and fragrant the countrysides and lanes.

Drawing near to Broadlands, Reba lost herself in the fresh, sweetly compelling charm of it. Tender grass, young leaves, blackbirds and mockers musical among trees and thickets, deep blue overarching sky, combined to exercise upon her a gently soothing influence to which she had been for many months a stranger.

She had ridden out of Philadelphia rebellious and disgusted. Under British military occupancy the gayest, most frivolous seven months that the Quaker City had ever known were about to culminate in a grand burst of extravagant revelry, designed by his officers as a farewell tribute to General Howe, who was on the eve of his departure for England.

In the mother country sharp criticism of his conduct of the war in America in general, and of his soft living and inaction in Philadelphia in particular had been rife. Now, by his own request, he was allowed to relinquish a command for which he had had no real appetite, and was about to be superseded by Sir Henry Clinton.

Quaker though she was by birth and upbringing, Reba, possessed of the normal young person's love of bright happenings, was no foe to harmless gayeties, and pleasant junketings, but the dark picture of her countrymen's dreadful sufferings at Valley Forge, and in Philadelphia's prisons, was too deeply etched upon her heart

and brain to permit her to regard with complacency the unbridled and flaunting luxuries of their foes.

Howe had refused permission to certain charitable citizens to provide blankets for the American soldiers, sleeping without bed or covering, in loathsome filth and rags, upon the floor of the Walnut Street Prison.

The contrast between these things, and the elaborate and costly preparations for this Mischianza, as the approaching fête was called, was too sharp and bitter for her to contemplate without a curling of the lip, and resentful eyes. Managed by Sir John Wrothesley, Colonel O'Hara, Major Gardiner, and Captain Montressor, it was to form a gorgeous spectacle and entertainment, to begin with a parade of coaches filled with military, and Tory ladies and gentlemen through the streets to Southwark, there to embark in richly decked galleys and rowboats. From there they would proceed in a brilliant regatta to Walnut Grove, the elegant country-seat of the now deceased Quaker, Joseph Wharton.

Triumphal arches, lauding General Howe, a tournament upon the lawn, wherein seven Knights of the Burning Mountain would break lances with seven Knights of the Blended Rose, for a queen of beauty, to be chosen from among fourteen Tory damsels, arrayed in scarlet satin tunics and Turkish trousers decked with gold, a fête champêtre, bands of music, a grand ball, and a midnight banquet, staged amid decorations and scenes painted by Captain André, were to be the outstanding features of this magnificent occasion.

It was on Saturday that Reba was riding Juno to Broadlands. The regatta was to start from King's Wharf, at half-past four of the afternoon on the following Monday. Every boat that could be obtained was being decked for the water procession.

" 'Twould make Friend Wharton turn in his grave, could he but know of such vain and worldly doings at his country-seat." Debby Norris had said to Reba, the evening before. "Tory girls dancing, and dressed like Turkish women! 'Tis said that Peg Shippen will not be allowed by her father to so much as show her face there, but she is set upon it, in spite of him, and I warrant thee, Reba, that she will be there, with the Chews, and Miss Auchmuty, and the other Tory belles," and her friend had agreed with her pronouncement.

But Reba had left disturbing thoughts behind her as she took the road down Gray's Lane, and let her spirits soar with the fragrance of the wayside blooms, and the singing of the birds.

The coming of Baron von Steuben, near the end of February, to Valley Forge, to become the volunteer drill-master of the raw recruits, the exposing and breaking up of the Conway Cabal against Washington, the tardy repentance of the unworthy successors to the splendid patriots who had formed the First Continental Congress, the full powers granted at last to the Commander-in-Chief, his appointment of General Greene to the office of Commissary, had, by the month of April, brought long delayed plenty, at last, to the soldiers at Valley Forge. The alliance had been formed with France, and a French fleet had sailed for America from Toulon, under Count D'Estaing. Hopes were rising again from what had seemed their grave.

This tender-hearted, loyal-souled Quaker maid could ride forward, therefore, into the full unfolding of Spring, forgetting for an hour everything but its beauty.

Flashing brightly in the sunshine wound the placid Schuylkill, mirroring sky and cloud and trees as it had one morning in June, close to a year ago, when she had,

among blossoming roses, vowed herself to the cause of freedom. "Freedom's daughter" the great Commander-in-Chief had called her. Yes, that she would be to the end.

The river beckoned, and having reached Broadlands, she rode down to it, and dismounted, to look up and down stream before going to the house. Her small rowboat, *The Osprey,* would be lying beached and dry beside its dock in its sheltered cove.

Beached it was, where she had expected to find it, but in a state that filled her with astonishment and wrath. Whereas it had been white, it was now dazzling vermilion within and without. Cushions covered with scarlet velvet lay on its seats. Along its sides, attached to slender rods, gay pennants fluttered. Swags of bunting hung between. On gilded poles, at stem and stern, British flags and regimental colors swelled and sank with the coming and going of the breeze.

Hammer and nails lay on the dock. Scraps of red cloth made spots of color on the grass. Someone had been at work this very morning; someone who might be near at hand, and would soon return; someone, evidently, who intended to use her boat in the regatta to be given in honor of a man who was an enemy to her country.

Reba stood transfixed, and enraged, the gaudy brightness of the boat smiting her eyeballs with irritating force. Brows knit, angry gaze upon the hateful thing that had been *The Osprey,* she waited only to consider how she could prevent it from being used for such a purpose. Her mind was made up quickly, and in another moment she was running like a deer toward the house.

Jabez and his farm hands were away in field and wood. Molly Foster was egg-hunting in the barn. There

was no one to help Reba, but she needed no assistance.

A deep iron pot hung empty on the crane. She snatched it down, and heaped into it a double shovelful of glowing embers from the hearth. A cover on the pot, a handful of pine knots, and she had left the kitchen with them, and was on her way to the dock.

Not one spasm of regret did she feel for what she was about to do to her cherished boat, friend of many a happy hour on the river, as she poured the red-hot coals upon the floor of it, and tossed in the fat pine knots. Not then, nor when its planks, doubly inflammable from new turpentine-laden paint, kindled with a roar from the heat of the sputtering pine.

Blaze, and snap, and crackle, mounting sparks, and raging flames, only these could purge her land of what had been *The Osprey,* but which was now become symbol and part of the pompous and foolish extravaganza which was to make of Sir William Howe the laughing-stock of England.

She stood watching the red rush upward. Hammer, nails, scraps of cloth,—she had tossed them into the conflagration. Naught but ashes should remain when those who had commandeered her boat came to row it away to join the regatta.

The furious noise of the burning blotted out the sound of approaching footsteps, and the shouts of dismay of a young officer who sprang out from the drifting smoke in startling proximity to her.

Scarlet uniform with blue and gold facings marked him a British officer, but the fine straight nose, the handsome forehead, and the large eyes were those of the young man who had prevented her from falling to the pavement in front of the Norris door, on the day that she had gone to seek protection for John Bartram's gar-

den. "André," she had heard his fellow officer call him.

The ireful glance with which she had greeted his precipitate appearance melted a little before his charming grace of person, and the gentle reproach in eyes by nature pensive, and of unusual softness. Besides, there was the memory of his help on that former occasion. She waited for him to speak the first word.

"A rarely fine bonfire, my dear young lady, but a sad loss of a good boat, and much labor," protested André mournfully. " 'Twas to have graced a pageant."

On his own part, he had recognized the lovely Quaker maid, no less lovely to his appreciative gaze than she had been when he had seen her in a softer, more appealing mood. A ready victim to beauty, always, he could not speak ungently to one so fair, even under circumstances the most exasperating to him.

"A boat not thine own, nor for an enemy's use," Reba told him uncompromisingly. "Rather would I see it burn a hundred times over than to let it go for such a purpose."

"Not my own, truly," he answered with grave courtesy, "but you must believe me that I had warrant for its use."

"Warrant for its use? Impossible!"

"Ah, but I had," insisted André, and fumbled hurriedly in the pocket of his coat. "See," when he had found a folded paper, and opened it, "here it is."

It was signed by Richard Skinner, and in a few words gave permission to use *The Osprey* in the regatta.

"He had no right to give thee this," declared Reba, "The boat is not his."

"Yet he claimed to be arbiter of this, as well as of every other boat belonging to Stanhope properties, for while their vessels have been commandeered by the

Crown, he hath a deciding voice in their use, and the manner of it."

"And reaps a revenue from them, doubtless," she cried scornfully.

Captain André shrugged his shoulders slightly. "That I cannot tell you."

"Thee needs not," was the cold reply, "I can guess it for myself."

"If I could have learned sooner how the matter stood, there would have been neither ash nor ember on your shore today," returned Captain André gallantly, though unable to refrain from a regretful glance at the glowing coals, becoming slowly overspread by a grey film, which was all that now remained of *The Osprey*.

"I cannot blame thee, since it was his doing that thee took my boat," acknowledged Reba frankly, untying Juno from the tree to which she had been hitched.

André helped her to mount. "Your pardon, mademoiselle," he said, relapsing to the habit of speech of his ancestry, "I grieve to have caused you either resentment or loss."

"And I forgive thee. Thee was a friend to me one day, last Autumn, when I was in need of help." Her smile was graciously sweet.

He watched her ride away, thinking that to his taste she had no peer among the Tory belles.

As for Reba, her errand to Jabez Foster done, she rode directly to Richard Skinner on Dock Street.

Richard, at his desk, casting up a private account of ship earnings, saw from her face, as Elkanah Jones ushered her in, that a storm was about to break. It would be as well to have Elkanah out of the way until it had spent itself.

He took a list of merchandise from one of the pigeon-

holes of his desk, and handed it to his clerk. "Thee may see that these are ready for shipment, Elkanah. The brig *Penelope* sails tomorrow as thee knows."

" 'Tis well that thee sends Elkanah forth, Richard," observed Reba cuttingly, when the clerk had left them. "Otherwise he might chance to overhear of thy dishonorable dealings."

Skinner flushed with anger, though he answered composedly, "Thee uses strong words, Reba, but thee was never prone to that control of thy tongue believed in by Friends."

His sanctimonious reproof of her was as fire to tow. She flamed at him.

"There are no words strong enough to speak thy villainy. That thee is untruthful I have long known. That thee is a thief does not surprise me. Thee not only dishonestly withholds our monies, but now I find that our vessels, which thee has pretended were commandeered by the Crown, really come and go to thy profit, and thee has dared to give my *Osprey* for use in this vain show upon the river to make holiday for those toward whom thee professes to be neutral. Had I known it, I would have burned every ship of ours with my own hands first, ere ever thee should have had such opportunity, even as I have an hour since burned *The Osprey* to grey ashes. Out upon thee, Richard Skinner, for an unprincipled scoundrel."

"Thee speaks loud for a Quaker maid," smiled Richard, when she had paused for breath. He had lolled back in his chair, thumbs in vest-pockets, regarding her as though she were some tempestuous child whom it amused him to watch. "Yet listen, while I cool thee, while I remind thee, as I have before, that I can say much of thee to Joseph Galloway, the Commissioner of Police. Be-

sides thy liberation of Gilbert Westwood from the Provost, thee has since carried intelligence to His Majesty's rebellious subjects, thee has made weekly visits to their encampment, thee has given aid and comfort to them, and now thee has destroyed the boat which was to have place in the regatta. There are grave punishments due thee for this."

One by one he checked off the catalogue of her so-called misdeeds upon his fingers, while Reba, her slender figure drawn to its full height, regarded him without a trace of quailing.

"I am no subject of the King," she answered. "I owe him no allegiance. Thee, who calls thyself neutral, to mask thy evil doings, seeks to ruin Aunt Hannah and me, so that thee may profit thyself. Thee is no neutral. Thee serves the Crown, though not for the Crown's sake. Thee serves it for thine own. As for the Testimony, thee has no part in it, so far has thee departed from Friends' precepts and example. Thee seeks to ruin us, but I do believe, Richard, that thee will fail. My countrymen will be victorious, for there is that which rises in them in spite of famine, and disease, and desperate misfortunes, and when the British are driven from our shores, where, then, will be thy idle threats?"

"They are not gone yet, nor will be for many a day to come, if ever," replied Richard unmoved. "Meanwhile, thee is in my power, and thy friends also."

"My friends?" echoed Reba, incredulously.

"Thy friends," repeated he. "I will tell thee how, for the time has come when thee needs to know it. I can disgrace thy friends."

Reba turned from him in impatient disgust, so little did she believe his words.

"Nay, not so fast, Reba," he said evenly, "I could

tell of how Gilbert Westwood,—" (he saw how quickly she gave attention at the name) "did give his warrant to have his most trusted pilot used to bring in the rebel frigate *Delaware* to attack the earthworks of Lord Cornwallis, last September."

"I remember it," she admitted, wondering what he drove at.

"The frigate *Delaware* did go aground in such position that she could not use her guns, and was captured."

"A sorry circumstance."

"Strange, was it not, that so skilled a pilot should suddenly lose skill, and knowledge of the river's tides and shoals?" A keen edge of irony was in his tones.

Reba stared at him. What was it that he meant to imply?

"It was of intent," announced Richard coolly.

"Whose?"

"Gilbert's. He offered his pilot to bring in the frigate, and the pilot saith that he followed the instructions given him by Westwood to the letter. It would look black for Gilbert, would it not, if this should come to the ears of Washington? Thee sees where he stands; therefore, if thee would purchase my silence and clemency, thee had best let me hear no more of thy railings."

"None could prove it, nor would any credit so vile a falsehood." The girl's voice was low and tense, and her eyes were smoldering fires. "None who knows Gilbert could ever call him traitor. Yet, thee, out of the meanness of thy spirit, and the hardness of thy nature would accuse him. It almost passeth belief that thee should seek to attempt it."

"He might have more trouble to prove his innocency than thee thinks. In days like these a man's unsupported word doth not go far. Who can be certain that there

was not a perfect understanding between him and this pilot? His word will weigh little in his favor, when General Washington remembers that the capture of the frigate opened the way for his enemies to the Jerseys, and helped to make possible the fall of the rebel forts."

"Gilbert hath more than his bare word to offer. Methinks that his services to his country, given every day and hour with faithfulness and devotion, will outweigh in the mind of our General every false accusation that can be brought against him."

Richard Skinner made no further reply. His eyes followed her calmly as she gathered her shawl about her and left the office. There were ways in which the matter of the pilot could be presented that would be convincing, and damaging to Westwood, of that he felt confident.

When Reba had left the warehouse, Elkanah Jones came in to lay before his employer the list of merchandise which had been given him.

"I would call to thy attention, Friend Skinner," he observed, his countenance respectful and immobile, "that thee has given me the wrong list. I was unwilling to disturb thee while thee was busy with thy client, but there is still time enough to carry out thy wishes, if thee will give me the proper list."

When it had been furnished him, and Elkanah had gone to the dock, Richard sat looking out upon the masts and the river, asking himself, "How much hath Elkanah heard?" It gave him food for thought in many a succeeding hour.

Chapter XXVII

Joseph Galloway was come to speak with Richard Skinner in Dock Street.

A month had gone by since Richard had given Reba to understand that Gilbert Westwood's good name was in jeopardy, and at his mercy.

The follies and splendors of the Mischianza were of the past. General Sir William Howe had sailed for his native land. The French Alliance, long sought, and now consummated, had been celebrated by the Americans with rejoicings. Count D'Estaing, in spite of adverse winds, had reached Boston waters, with the large fleet that he commanded, more than three weeks before.

Alarmed at the prospect of being cooped up in Philadelphia, the British had been giving signs that they were preparing to depart, for since the middle of May troops had been moved out at intervals.

"They are surely going," Debby Norris had exulted. "We shall have our city to ourselves once more!"

"If only we might," Reba had sighed wistfully. These months of redcoat occupancy had been interminably slow for her in their passing, weighted as they had been by anxieties and deprivations that at times had been almost insupportable. Fortunately the men billeted upon them had been gone for several weeks, and the Stanhope house had been restored to its former peaceful state. The moment the British were out, she and her aunt would call in legal counsel, remove their affairs from the control of Richard Skinner, and compel settlement of old accounts.

Richard Skinner knew that, in the present turn of affairs, and with the Crown out of power in Philadelphia, (temporarily only, so the Tories believed), that he could neither hope to continue in the administration of the Stanhope shipping, nor obtain, as yet, their landed properties. But he meant to make sure of whatever of their monies were in his keeping, and of the revenues that he had derived from the use of their ships during the British occupancy. Upon Gilbert's ruin he was determined, for through that he could make Reba pay the penalty for her every scornful word and act toward himself.

In these days of hot feeling, and of a too swift execution, in many instances, of what appeared to be justice, more than one innocent person, to his certain knowledge, had had a punishment meted out to him which he had never earned.

Whatever conscience he had once possessed, had long since been extinguished in Richard Skinner. His father's death in exile, in January, when it had removed from him the last tie of natural affection, had also released him from the solitary restraint upon his actions that he respected. To gratify his cupidity, to satisfy his malicious resentment against Reba and those she loved, were now his supreme desires, and he meant to stop at nothing to accomplish either, provided he could do so without unmasking himself in the eyes of the world. Neutrality would continue to be a sufficient cloak for him for the present; loyalty to the Crown later.

Such things occupied the forefront of his thoughts on this day in June, as he sat face to face with Joseph Galloway in his office in Dock Street.

"We loyalists will be wise in going to New York with the English," Galloway was telling him. "We shall save

our necks from the rebels, and when the Crown regains power, we can return comfortably to our mansions, and our estates. You take transport with us on the night of the seventeenth, I presume, Mr. Skinner."

Richard shook his head. "I have some small matters to adjust before I go," he said, "but I shall not be far behind thee. Ostensibly I am a neutral, as thee remembers, and I will have no difficulty in getting away from Philadelphia whenever it seems me best. When the Crown returns to power thee will, of course, not forget to keep thy promise, and use thy influence to obtain for me the Stanhope estates, which will naturally become confiscate on account of the rebellious activities of their owners. This thee promised me in September for my services in corrupting the pilot who grounded the frigate *Delaware* in the harbor."

"I have not forgotten that I authorized you to hope for that reward. I will do my best to see that you receive it."

"There is another small matter," pursued Richard serenely, as he brushed a speck of dust from the lapel of his coat. "It is of some consequence to me, however, and perhaps as much to the Crown, to rid ourselves of the girl Poll. She hath been a useful tool for us in the past, but she hath a loose tongue, and a fondness for gaudy uniforms, and coin, that may make of her an inconvenient turncoat, should she remain hereabouts."

Galloway, who had been rebel to serve his own ends, and now was Tory for the same reason, flushed darkly at the word *turncoat,* but Richard Skinner's countenance gave no indication of intent to thrust at him, and he said nothing.

"Can thee manage," went on Richard, "to have her go aboard of one of the transports that sail tomorrow,

to be transferred thence, as opportunity offers, to some British ship sailing for Jamaica?"

"It can be arranged," he agreed.

"In such a way as to prevent return?"

"Perfectly. Restraint after she reaches Jamaica, prison if need be. Till then she is merely on a pleasant cruise."

"Most satisfactory," beamed Skinner, and with these understandings they parted.

They had spoken in carefully guarded tones, yet it happened that Elkanah Jones had been a near, though unsuspected presence, and a voluntary eavesdropper.

For some time past he had doubted the genuineness of his employer's neutrality, and integrity. His accidental overhearing of the high words between Reba and Skinner on the day of the burning of *The Osprey* had confirmed his suspicions. The coming of Joseph Galloway, a noted Tory, this morning, was an added confirmation, and Elkanah, in view of the rumors afloat that many Tories were planning to depart with His Majesty's fleet, felt himself justified in learning, if he could, what Richard's plans and activities really were, and the more so, because he believed that Reba Stanhope's fortunes were seriously involved by them.

Elkanah's devotion to David Stanhope and to Henry Skinner, during their lives, made him zealous for Reba's interests now, and he was resolved to take any legitimate means to protect her from dishonorable treatment, and to save Gilbert from injustice.

Therefore, he deliberately secreted himself on the other side of a thin partition, between the office and one of the storerooms, after he had been dismissed by Richard, and had heard everything that had been said.

Elkanah was a man of few words, but was of a most timely efficiency and circumspection. Before Christ

Church bells had pealed the hour of noon, he had despatched a messenger toward Valley Forge to find Gilbert Westwood.

The remainder of that day, and throughout the next, troops were crossing to the Jersey shore, and the streets of Philadelphia, long the theatre of care-free social comings and goings on the part of military usurpers and Tory inhabitants, became the scene of rushings to and fro that preceded their departure. No less than a thousand Tories were preparing to embark with Admiral Howe's fleet, to escape the incoming of the Colonial troops by land, and the imminent appearance of the French fleet before the harbor.

It was as though the inhabitants of an anthill had been thrown into sudden panic. Bales of household goods, boxes, carpet-bags, hair-trunks, mingled on the docks with impedimenta and baggage of officers and common soldiers. Many persons went aboard at once, fearful lest by some unfortuitous circumstance they might be left behind, and caught up into a veritable whirl of disaster.

Early in the evening of the seventeenth of June, Richard Skinner, hastening toward the docks, felt a twitch at his sleeve. A sidelong glance showed him Poll, eager-eyed, red-cheeked, buoyant.

"I be going with the fleet, Mister Skinner," she announced gleefully, believing it would be news to him. "Old Chris Marshall, and Mistress can wonder and search, but this time they'll not find Poll, and fetch her back to stupid Lancaster. When Poll's tired she'll come home again, and not before."

Richard looked upon her pleasantly. "Thee's earned thy cruise, Poll," he said, and slipped her a silver shilling.

Poll bit it, tucked it in her pocket, and grinned at him genially as he left her. None embarked so blithely as

she, a-flutter with joyous anticipation of new scenes, new adventures, new excitements, and jollities. Her few gauds of wearing apparel, except for those that decked her impudent person, were in a stout sack, vigilantly guarded by her, although she appeared to be completely absorbed in efforts to catch the notice of every officer who crossed her view.

She was going forth to what she conceived in her imagination to be a wonderland, little guessing the port for which she was actually bound, and from which she was destined never to return.

Richard Skinner went on to his warehouse. No compunction arose in his breast. He had rid himself easily, and without disturbance, of what might have proved later to be a dangerous incumbrance.

This evening he intended to draft an accusation against Gilbert, written but not signed by himself, which he would send in to the Council of Safety, by a sure channel, but one which would not betray him as its author. He meant to couch it in terms the most convincing, to fortify it by whatever falsehoods were most likely to impose upon the credulity of these men. If it failed of its object, he would, later, even though then at a distance, make one effort after another until his end was gained.

The pilot, to make sure of his own safety, was going with the fleet, reluctantly it is true, because he knew none but Delaware River waters, yet prepared to learn new ones, since he must, and with the promise from Skinner of a modest sum of money to carry with him.

Skinner frowned as he stepped upon his own dock, for there was a light burning in his office. Elkanah Jones must be in the warehouse, probably finishing some belated piece of work. He would dismiss him, no matter

what the importance of it, for on this evening his presence, never expected at such an hour, was particularly unwelcome.

Mounting the stairs without more than ordinary celerity, he arrived at the door of his office, to stop abruptly on the sill, with a sharp intake of the breath.

It was not Elkanah alone who confronted him there. In the circle of light cast by a ship's lantern hanging upon a jut of the wall, sat Hannah and Reba Stanhope, and Elkanah Jones. Behind them, in the posture of a soldier on guard, stood Gilbert Westwood.

Gilbert wore no uniform, nor carried any weapon, but something of cold fear gripped Richard Skinner at sight of him, and of the rest of that silently accusing group, for there was that in the countenance of the young Free Quaker, that gave the man pausing on the threshold to know that his hour of reckoning was come.

In that momentary pause Richard braced himself for the encounter. After all, he told himself, a cool head, and a wary tongue were as good weapons for it as any that Gilbert possessed.

He crossed the sill.

"Thee pays thy visit at an unusual time, and abundantly attended, Friend Stanhope," he said suavely, levelling his gaze solely upon her.

"There could be none more fitting," returned she coldly, "as Gilbert Westwood will acquaint thee."

"I take it that thee comes upon no private business, if Gilbert be thy spokesman," was Richard's comment, seating himself comfortably in the chair beside his desk.

"The most private and particular." Gilbert stepped into the circle of light as he spoke, the stern set of his features matching the sternness of his tone. "I come to demand of thee an immediate settlement of the Stanhope claims against thee,—ay, and of my father's also."

"And if I should refuse thee?" smiled Richard.

"Refusal will not avail thee any longer. Thee shall give an accounting to the last penny. Elkanah hath made known to me that thee purposes to follow the British, and that would mean that the monies in thy possession would go with thee,—that thee would rob us altogether."

Richard Skinner shot a sardonic glance at his clerk. "It appeareth that thee has played the eavesdropper, Elkanah."

Elkanah returned his look composedly. "Thee made it needful," was his laconic reply.

"Withholding of our monies is but a small part of thy iniquities," proceeded Gilbert, his searching eyes bent upon him. "Thee has long threatened Reba, and Friend Stanhope to betray them to the British, on my account. Happily thy power to do them this despite is ended. But thee still holds over them the fear of my disgrace, which thee hopes to achieve by an infamous falsehood."

Richard, sitting unruffled at his desk, gave no reply, and scarcely seemed to hear the charges made against him. It was as if it pleased him, since he could do naught else at present, to anger Gilbert beyond endurance by his assumed indifference.

"Thee has told Reba," continued his accuser, "that a Westwood pilot, under my instructions, betrayed the frigate *Delaware* into the power of the enemy. Yet it was thee, as Elkanah heard thee say to Joseph Galloway, thee,—debasing one who had been through all his life an honest man,—who led him to sell his country to profit thyself."

Neither admitting nor denying, Richard Skinner still maintained his imperturbable composure, ignoring Hannah Stanhope's austere regard, Reba's denouncing eyes, and Elkanah's impassive observance of him.

"And it may well be that it was he," cried Reba,

breaking her long silence, as a new suspicion sprang into her brain,—"he who used my name to lure thee to the wood where the redcoats lay in wait for thee, Gilbert. It would be of a piece with all the rest."

Richard made a slow gesture at this, as if to brush away vain talk, and would have spoken had not Gilbert interposed curtly. "My leave is short. Have out thy books now, and pay us our monies, or I will wrest them from thee by force."

Arms rigidly folded, Richard sat without making any move to obey.

Gilbert turned to Elkanah. "Thee knows the ledgers, and yonder is the money-chest." And then to Skinner, "Yield me the key of the chest."

The clerk, obeying, went forward, to stretch his hand toward the red-backed ledger but Skinner leapt to his feet, and set his back in front of the desk, barring the way. "Stand off, Elkanah," he snarled, "How dare thee attempt to touch my private records?"

"He takes them by my command. Have a care how thee prevents him," warned Gilbert, and with one sweep of his arm he whirled Skinner out of way, and forced him down into the chair that he had left. " 'Tis folly to resist," he told him. "We be two strong men. Therefore, give me thy key, and sit quiet while Elkanah reads what is due us."

Gnawing his under lip as though he would gnaw it through, Skinner drew out the key, and flung it at Gilbert's head.

The key missed its aim, and Gilbert caught it dexterously as it fell.

White, baffled, compelled to remain non-resistant, Richard Skinner listened in helpless rage while Elkanah read out not only the record of the large sums which

should have been paid to the Stanhopes and the Westwoods before the entry of the British, but also the damaging memoranda in a smaller and secret ledger which he found in the money-chest, showing the enormous revenues which had come to himself from the use of their vessels in the service of the Crown, as a portion of his stipulated reward for the betrayal of the frigate.

Reba and Hannah Stanhope, hearing, never once removed their eyes from Skinner's face, divested now of every trace of its customary rosy hue. Yet they gazed upon him unseeing. Instead, there appeared to be passing before them a panorama of the woeful sights they had looked upon in that past year. For many of these he was, in part at least, responsible. As they reviewed them, Gilbert was speaking in solemn denunciation.

"It was thee who helped to continue the presence of the enemy in our city. Thee is one of those who made possible the frightful sufferings that our army endured in this hideous winter. The blood of countless soldiers cries out against thee from the snows of Valley Forge. Their anguish, their dying groans, should haunt thee to thy grave. These judge thee, not only for the iniquities of thy past, but for the further evils thee has intended."

Whatever Richard Skinner may have felt, he gave no sign of remorse. There was a cold sneer upon his lips as they framed his answer: "Thee has told me that thy leave is short. Thee needs not waste a moment of it on my conscience. Let Elkanah count thy monies, and then take them and go. I would be alone with my private affairs."

Silence reigned then, except for the mellow clinking of golden coin as it was counted and piled in glittering rows by the careful Elkanah.

When a total had been reached that included earnings

to the date on which he had taken over the ships for his own use, Richard raised his hand. "Enough, Elkanah," he commanded, and Elkanah paused with an inquiring look, not at his employer, but at Westwood.

"Nay," spoke Westwood firmly. "Thee pays to the full,—to this present time."

Reba sprang up, and raised her voice in passionate protest, "Not one penny will I have that has been earned by serving the Crown, Gilbert. Let him keep such ill-gotten gains. They shall never soil my fingers."

"Nor mine," declared Hannah Stanhope from the shadow.

"Bethink thee," urged Gilbert Westwood, in a voice of authority. "These monies have been foully gained, yet they were earned by our own honest ships. Turn them, as I shall mine, either to be used in thine own hands to our country's needs, or to be taken to His Excellency, General Washington, to be disposed of as seems to him best."

"Count on, Elkanah, cried Reba in instant acquiescence. "Richard had not thought to help his country, but in this much, at least, we will compel him."

And to this Hannah Stanhope bowed her head in assent.

In black fury at this further diminishing of his goodly store, Richard saw his clerk continue to lay out the golden coin until a complete accounting had been made.

Elkanah fetched an empty leathern sack from the chest, shoveled the gold into it that belonged to the Stanhopes, and tied the neck securely. Handing it to Friend Hannah, he suggested gravely, "Thee had best carry it well hidden under thy cloak, until it is safely housed." He did the same for Gilbert, but without the

warning. He gave him, a man, credit for due discretion in such matters.

Westwood turned to Hannah. "Will thee not give this to my father with my duty?" he asked. "I may not see him soon, and he has lacked much for want of his monies."

But it was Reba who took the sack from him.

"Give Friend Stanhope and Reba thy protection on the way, Elkanah," said Gilbert. "They must not adventure forth alone in the night, and I have need of further speech with Richard."

"I refuse thee opportunity." Richard hurled the words at him through clenched teeth, where he sat glowering in his chair.

"Thee has no choice," declared Westwood, with imperatively lifted hand.

Chapter XXVIII

From a side window of the warehouse Gilbert saw Reba and her aunt turn the corner of Dock Street, under sober convoy of Elkanah Jones.

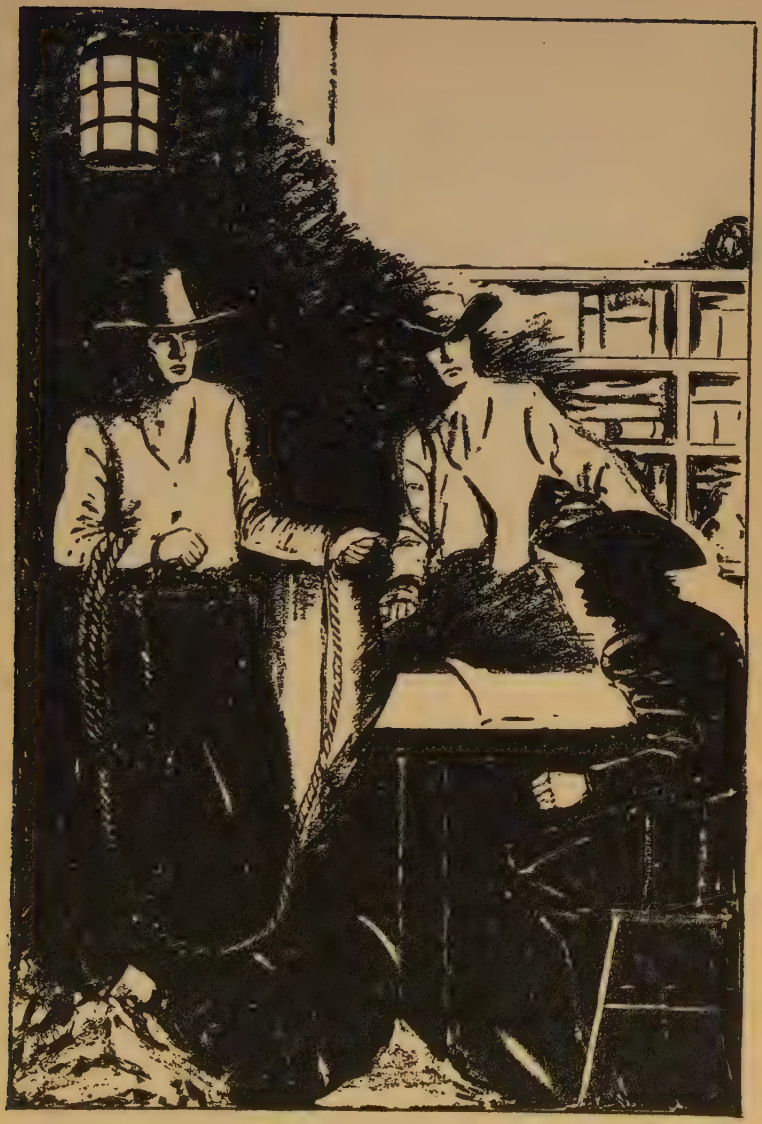
They had not more than vanished when a heavy footfall was heard upon the stair, and presently the stalwart figure of Isaac Huntoon loomed in the doorway of the office.

Richard, who had been waiting with ill-concealed impatience to know what further Gilbert Westwood could have to say to him, beheld the newcomer with startled recognition. He had thought that by some strategy he might be able to cope with Gilbert when they were left alone together, provided the young Free Quaker offered him any violence, but in the presence of, and aided by this other, of enormous strength, he knew himself completely overpowered.

He had not meant to listen for more than a moment to Gilbert. Now he saw that he must, if Gilbert so willed.

Yet it was not for abundance of words that Gilbert Westwood had tarried, as he soon made plain to him.

"Whether or no, thee meant to depart with the fleet, or at thy convenience later," he said, his voice beating ominously upon Richard's reluctant ears, "thee goes not forth of here except as prisoner, bound hand and foot, to appear before thy judges, and to pay the penalty of thy misdeeds."



"And a short shrift you'll get," prophesied Isaac Huntoon.

"And a short shrift you'll get," prophesied Isaac Huntoon, swinging significantly a coil of hemp rope, which he had brought with him from below.

Richard Skinner shuddered involuntarily. He had given much thought to ropes about the necks of others, but never had considered the possibility of one about his own.

Between himself, and the door, and liberty, were these two menacing and determined men. Notwithstanding that, he would not allow himself to be taken easily.

An open window, through which blew the damp night air from the river, was behind him. He knew that outside it hung the iron hoisting crane, with a cable of immense thickness and strength depending from it, by which huge bales of goods were raised and lowered. The rope was elevated half way from the ground, and the distance from the rope's end to the dock beneath was not so great, but that he could leap it, and escape.

A derisive smile upon his lips, he sprang to the window, and set foot upon the sill.

He had clambered out upon the crane, and was reaching for the cable, when a strong and relentless hand dragged him back and in, as though he had been a feather. Once Isaac Huntoon's bronzed fist closed upon anything, it held fast.

After the first wild struggle, Richard Skinner resigned himself, and in a trice lay helpless and bound upon the floor.

Westwood looked down upon him from his height. "Tonight," he said, "thee is disgraced in private. Tomorrow thee will be disgraced before the world, thy mask torn from thee, thy true character revealed."

Leaning to the lantern, he extinguished it, and Richard Skinner, writhing powerless in the pitchy blackness of

the counting-room, heard the footsteps of the two men recede, and the outer door of the warehouse close.

He lay, perforce, where they had left him, and his reflections were bitter. His long scheming, his ceaseless selfish activities had come to this.

An hour passed. Through the open window came the sound of the river lapping the piles of the dock. Dank coolness from the water settled round and upon him, and once the splash of oars was heard, from a swiftly moving boat.

Slowly the moon rose, and sent a silver bar across him, and soon after the door of the warehouse creaked, and his straining ears told him that again there were footsteps on the stair. Could they be those of a thief, come to rob his chest, and he powerless to prevent it? He ground his teeth together at the thought.

A cold sweat broke out upon him. He raised his head painfully that he might keep his anxious eyes upon the door. But when he saw who entered, hope sprang anew within him.

It was Seth Ousley, the pilot, who had come,—come at this hour, and at his own request,—as he now remembered, although under the stress of what the evening had brought forth it had been driven from his mind. He heaved a sigh of relief, for he saw liberation at hand.

Arrested by the unexpected sight that met him, the pilot stood staring at Skinner, incredulous and amazed.

"What's here?" he muttered uncertainly, under his breath.

"Unbind me."

Richard Skinner's hoarse voice cutting across the space between them aroused him to action. Mechanically he came, knelt down, and tugged at the hard knots

drawn taut by the giant fingers of Isaac Huntoon. They did not yield by the merest fraction.

"Take thy knife," Richard bade him, and Ousley obeyed.

The last stout hempen bond sawed through by a knife none too sharp, Richard Skinner rose, rubbing his stiffened wrists and ankles, and wincing at the pain where he struck the raw.

"Our affair of the grounding of the frigate is known in wrong quarters, Seth Ousley," he informed the pilot with a bitter laugh.

"Known?" echoed Ousley, "How's that come about?"

"No matter how. Enough that it is," returned Skinner shortly.

Seth Ousley looked out across the waters of the Delaware, his jaws dropped, his fingers working. The news staggered him. True enough, he meant to go that night, but justice had a long arm, and a pilot, even in strange waters was a marked figure, and easily found.

In a blaze of resentment he turned upon Skinner. "I were an honest man," he growled, "until you put your damnable temptations my way. You've ruined me,—you, with your smooth Quaker face, and smooth talk. A Quaker, you? No, a devil, no less. Decent Quakers give your like a wide berth. Well for Seth Ousley if he had, too. I wish I'd let you rot in them ropes there, afore ever I cut 'em off you."

"Thee had thy price," returned Richard coolly, "and thee has it now. Otherwise thee had not listened in the first instance, nor would thee be here tonight. I make thee this offer: take the gold I shall give thee," (and he named a sum that dazzled Ousley), "go aboard a transport in the harbor, and away with the British to New York. A pilot such as thee will not be slow to learn the

waters of a strange harbor. Thee will be safe in New York while the British hold power there. A pilot such as thee will know how to take advantages of such opportunities as I shall be able to throw in his way, when I am come thither, which will be shortly."

Richard Skinner knew him, and his price. Ousley swallowed his ire, based largely upon fear, and disappointment, took the money that was counted out to him, and left the man who had tempted him from the paths of rectitude, promising to return to him again in new scenes, when occasion favored.

While the pilot went to seek a place on one of Howe's transports, and Richard Skinner was gathering his monies and important papers into bulging portmanteaux, and destroying such documents as he did not care either to take or to leave behind him, the troops of His Britannic Majesty were passing in a continuous stream to the Jersey shore.

Eleven thousand men had marched the four miles to Gloucester Point during the course of the day which had just passed, there to be carried across the Delaware River in flat-boats to the opposite side. Nine thousand more remained to be got over that night.

They passed out steadily, unceasingly, without the blare of trumpet and beat of drum that had heralded their triumphant entry in September. No loud huzzas, no swaggering gait of conquerors marked their departure. The menace of the French fleet in front, and Washington at their backs made them anxious only to be gone as swiftly and as silently as possible, before their own fleet became hopelessly blocked in Philadelphia's harbor, and themselves taken in the toils.

So all through the night they went, regiment by regiment, brigade by brigade, horse and foot, British soldier

and Hessian mercenary, to join their comrades for the retreat through the Jerseys.

Grey of dawn was dissolving into blue of morning, and the long shafts of the rising sun gilded the swelling canvas of Admiral Howe's departing fleet as Richard Skinner, Poll, and Seth Ousley, on separate transports, sailed forth to exile.

Chapter XXIX

Hard on the heels of the retiring British came Captain Allen McLane, vigilant and bold American lighthorseman, with fifty of his riders, Gilbert Westwood among them, supported by one hundred foot-soldiers. These entered the city with such expedition that they captured some of the enemy's men and wagons almost at the water's edge.

By eight o'clock of the morning of June eighteenth, not a redcoat was left in the Quaker City, nor a sign of their recent encampment on the Jersey shore.

A descent upon the counting-room of Richard Skinner showed the prisoner gone, the severed ropes upon the floor, the money-chest empty, and every scrap of written evidence of his guilty activities vanished. Search for him, and for the treacherous pilot, Seth Ousley, was vain.

"They have got safe away," Gilbert told Reba, with a rueful countenance, when he saw her later, "able to work harm in new fields, though not to us here."

But the pilot was drowned, not long after, while learning strange waters, and Richard Skinner deemed it wise to cross the seas to England with his moneybags, before the war was done, there to end his days, treated with contempt and suspicion by those to whom he had linked himself in working for the Crown.

Back to their city homes, or to what was left of them, hurried the old inhabitants, who had gone into voluntary exile in towns and country while the British had held sway. In chaises and coaches, on horseback, or driven in chairs, they arrived singly, or in companies.

In rumbled American artillery. In came Major General Benedict Arnold with Colonel Jackson's Massachusetts regiment to take possession. The main body of the army, under General Washington, was already hotly pursuing the British, moving in a scarlet line along the Delaware River shore.

Flags flying, fifes shrilling, drums beating, with hoarsely jubilant shoutings, Philadelphia received her own again. Sour looks there were from those Tories who had remained, closed shutters in many places showed Quaker disapproval, but for the most part there was deep and sincere rejoicing that the city was freed from the enemy that had dwelt long and self-indulgently within her gates.

Debby Norris and Reba met one another half-way, running each to each, to felicitate over the happy event.

"We shall win, we shall win, Reba," cried Debby, whirling about, to go back with her to the Stanhope house. "Did I not tell thee so in the first place? Did I not say 'Win we must,' and did thee not say, 'Win we will?' "

"So we did," admitted Reba readily enough, only to add gravely. "Though I fear we have many a battle yet to fight, and many a field to win, before we are free and independent of England."

Gilbert, who had ridden in at dawn with McLane's lighthorsemen, rode away again before evening fell to join the Commander-in-Chief on the march. There were the briefest of farewells to his father and the Stanhopes, but his last look, his last words were for Reba, standing alone with her in the garden-close.

Her true eyes were lifted to his, and his, darkly blue, gazed deep down into hers.

"In all our joys, our sufferings, our hardships, and our dangers, we have been near," she whispered, "and now

—now thee is going far—how far I cannot guess. Yet I must bear it. I must let thee go. Nay, Gilbert—I send thee. I canot fight for my country. Fight for it in my stead, as well as in thine own, whether we be near or far."

"Near we shall always be in spirit, my Reba," he answered tenderly, "though battle-fields, and floods, or even death should intervene."

More than three years were yet to pass before freedom was won. Again General Washington was to pass through Philadelphia, again its streets were to echo to the feet of marching men on their swift way from New York to Virginia to entrap Lord Cornwallis between the American army on land, and the French fleet on the sea.

The citizens of Philadelphia had much to do in those years to rebuild their devastated areas, to restore their city to its old peaceful ways. Many a mansion, many a quiet delightful home had vanished. Debby Norris in November of the British occupation had seen from her own rooftop the dreadful conflagration miles away, in Germantown, where Fairhill, her grandfather's country-seat with its priceless library, and other stately homes, were burned to the ground by the British that they might not afford cover for their enemies. These were losses never to be made up.

Ships came and went in Philadelphia's harbor, as of old. The firm of Henry Skinner and Son was no more, but the shipping interests that it had handled were, by the efficient help of Elkanah Jones, turned over to those who would administer them honorably, as in the days of Henry Skinner himself.

Three eventful years they were, years of triumphs and defeats, years in which the fires of patriotism kept alive through the winter of Valley Forge burned on with an undying flame. Through them, every one, Gilbert, afar,

fought bravely, and won laurels well deserved, while Reba, at home in the Quaker City, spun, and sewed, and knitted, and with her aunt sent of their substance from open generous purses to wherever need cried out for relief.

Then came three o'clock of a morning in October, in the year 1781.

Reba, sleeping sweetly in the quiet of the hours before dawn, was wakened by the cry of the night-watch, an honest old German, who never yet had been able to master the English tongue.

His voice was not wont to rouse her as he paced the streets, calling the hours, and assuring those who waked that "All's well," but this morning his voice rang loud, and his "All's well" had a different wording, a more jubilant note.

"Bast dree o'glock, und Cornwallis ist dakened! Bast dree o'glock, und Cornwallis ist dakened!" Out into the silence of the night it rang, and echoed back and back from the red brick walls.

It meant that freedom was at last triumphant, that liberty was at hand. It heralded a new day to the nation still in the throes of its birth. It spelt for Reba and for Gilbert the beginning of long happiness together.

But in the supreme moment of her country's victory, in the face of this glorious consummation for which they two had struggled, and hoped, and suffered, all thoughts of personal joys, and approaching fulfilments, were merged in an emotion broader, more universal, through which the other ran like a golden thread.

Daughter of freedom, true lover of her country, she rose in haste, to fly on winged feet to Hannah Stanhope.

"Aunt Hannah! Aunt Hannah!" she cried exultingly, "The cause is won!"

THE END

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